This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

James Jones

1

MORNING EXERCISES

FOR

THE CLOSET:

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

By WILLIAM JAY.

Never be without a book, in daily reading, of a direct scriptural and devotional tendency.

Hale.

The testimonies of Thy grace
I set before mine eyes;
Thence I derive my daily strength,
And *there* my comfort lies.

Watts.

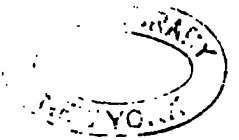
VOL. I.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.,
33, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1829.



PRINTED BY GEORGE WOOD, UNION STREET, BATH.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD AND LADY BARHAM,

This Work,

WITHOUT ANY OF THAT ADULATION,
WHICH WOULD LEAD *THEM* TO DESPISE THE AUTHOR, AND THE
AUTHOR TO DESPISE *HIMSELF*,

IS

DEDICATED:

AS A SMALL TESTIMONY TO PERSONAL AMIABLENESS,
RELATIVE EXCELLENCY,
DOMESTIC VIRTUE, AND EVANGELICAL RELIGION:

AS A LIVELY EXPRESSION OF HOPE,
THAT THEIR OFFSPRING MAY CALL THEIR PARENTS BLESSED, IN
FOLLOWING THEIR EXAMPLE:

AS A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE
INSTANCES OF THEIR FRIENDSHIP, WITH WHICH HE HAS
BEEN FAVOURED:

AND,

AS AFFORDING AN OPPORTUNITY
TO SUBSCRIBE HIMSELF THUS PUBLICLY, WITH EVERY
SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,

HIS LORDSHIP

AND HER LADYSHIP'S

OBLIGED AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

WILLIAM JAY.

Bath; Dec. 26th, 1828.

PREFACE.

A publication is not rendered improper or needless, because works of a similar nature have preceded it. Little would ever issue from the press, if such a principle were admitted. For what new thing is there under the sun? Neither is an author in this case supposed to undervalue the labours of those who have gone before him. He only adds to their number, with his own probabilities of excitement. And *he* may awaken fresh attention in the minds even of those who have made use of his predecessors: while he may fall into the hands of some who have to begin this kind of reading. Every author, too, has not only his own connexions, but his own manner; and thus, as the tastes of readers vary, more can be gratified.

The following pages, it is believed, will be found to differ a little from works of the same species; especially in making the exercises always express more fully the import of the textual motto at the head of them; in the arrangement of a greater diversity of subjects; in the selection of more passages from the less observed and less improved parts of Scripture; and in the seizure of hints of instruction from the more indirect and incidental strokes of the Sacred Penmen.

The work has, in some measure, been its own reward: but it required the author to sacrifice almost needful repose and relaxation, in seizing every spare moment from the engrossing duties of a large and important station. And the work was, he confesses, much more arduous in the execution than he had apprehended in the prospect. The *chief* difficulty arose from the necessity of so much compression and brevity. It was found no easy thing, in two or three pages, not only to secure the spirit of the passage; but to give it some illustration and effect, by glimpses of scenery, and glances at historical facts and traits of character—where diffusion and particularity were forbidden. While he makes no scruple to avow that this was his wish and design, he laments sincerely that he has not more perfectly succeeded in accomplishing them. Leisure, and an *exclusive* dedication of himself to the plan, for some months, or

even weeks, might have yielded something more satisfactory. But complaint is useless; and apology vain. He has done, in his circumstances, what he could. And it yields him pleasure to think, that besides some other works of a general nature for the religious public, and especially several for the use of families, he has now done something more particularly for the Closet.

The writer has always been attached to publications of this kind; and from his own experience, and observation, he is convinced of their adaptation to usefulness. He cannot but wish that Christians would read *the Scripture itself* more; and endeavour to *reflect themselves* on the passages, which, either in a continued course, or in selections at the time, come before them. The power of doing this would improve by the use; and the pleasure and advantage resulting from the facility, would amply reward any difficulty in the acquisition. But it is to be lamented, many do *not* reflect: and so the customary and cursory perusal, for *want of thought*, produces little impression; and the paragraph or chapter—or it may be even chapters—are immediately forgotten. But a verse or sentence, separately placed before the eye, is more distinctly remarked; and being illustrated in a brief and lively comment, is more easily remembered. To supply such assistance cannot be reckoned an attempt *to lead people* from the word

of God, but to it: and it may teach those who use it, in time, to do for themselves, what it may be necessary at first in another to do for them.

As to the subjects of these Exercises, the author has aimed to blend doctrine, experience, and practice together. There is danger of Antinomianism when the attention is *too exclusively* called to doctrinal points; of enthusiasm, when it is too exclusively attached to experimental; and of legality, when it is too exclusively confined to practical. It is the proportioned admixture of sentiment, feeling, and duty, that qualifies each; and renders them all, not only safe, but profitable. The writer, also, has not limited himself to the usual mode of making the subjects of such meditations always of the *consolatory* kind. Christians, in the divine life, want something besides comfort. They are to have their pure minds stirred up, by way of remembrance; to suffer the word of exhortation; to hear the reproofs of wisdom; to walk humbly with God; and wisely with men. Indeed, the best way to gain comfort is not always to seek it *directly*; but mediately: and the medium may require self-denial and patience. It is the same with comfort, as with reputation; it is more certainly secured as a consequence, than by making it a mere design.

The writer has not often put the exercise into the form of a soliloquy, or generally expressed

himself in the language of the first person. He found the common mode of address better suited, especially to the explanatory and hortative parts of his design. Why should not the reader consider himself the *addressed*, rather than the *speaker*? and, by immediate *application*, make, as much as possible, the reflections his own?

As to the style itself, what was principally designed for pious use in retirement could not be too clear, and easy, and forcible, and pointed; too much abounding with terse briskness, and naiveté of expression; too free from the tameness and smoothness by which common, but important truths, are aided to slide down from the memory into oblivion.

In three hundred and sixty-five exercises, there may be some coincidences; and the same thought, image, or example, may occur more than once—It was hardly possible to prevent it, as the whole series could not be kept in memory, or be continually compared. As the work advanced, the subjects too frequently *increased* in length, beyond the bounds he had prescribed himself—The case was: the printer pressed upon him—and he had not time to be short.

He *could* have introduced more of the exercises, in verse. If there be any blame arising from the few he *has* admitted, some friends ought to bear it, instead of himself.

But enough of this. The author commends the work to that part of the pious public who love and practise retreat; who wish not only to read the Scriptures alone, but to observe their beauties, and advantages; who, while they neglect not their own meditations, are thankful to derive help from others—and often exclaim, "A word fitly spoken, how good is it!" who wish to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long; who would not have their religion a visiter, but an inmate; who would speak of divine things, not by a kind of artificial effort, but out of the abundance of the heart; and who know how much it conduces to our sanctification to keep the mind filled with good things, not only as these will exclude base intrusions, but will be sure to leave somewhat of their own tinge and likeness behind.

As to readers of *this* character, the author trusts the materials here furnished will not be unacceptable, of whatever religious denomination they may be found. He considers the community in which, by the providence of God, he himself labours—not as a party—but only as a part; and he is not an enemy to the whole army, because he is attached to his own regiment. He does not oppose, but co-operate. He has not attempted in these volumes to conceal the leading sentiments which he holds; but he has not offensively obtruded them: nor has he availed himself of opportunities

to bring forward those particular views, in subordinate matters, in which he may differ from others. He readily allows that every man has a right to state and defend the opinions which he has derived from conviction: but his love should abound in knowledge and in all judgment; and he should regulate the degree of his zeal by the importance of the subject. He is also persuaded that the statement and the defence should be effected in a work avowedly for the purpose; and not be introduced into a publication adapted to general edification. How much less circulation and usefulness would Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion, and Alleine's Alarm, and other good books, have obtained, had their authors inserted their own minor partialities, and attacked those of others! In reading a valuable volume where such things are found, we *should* resemble the ox in the meadow, who, when he comes to a tuft of grass he dislikes, does not grow angry and attempt to tear it up with his hoofs and horns, but placidly leaves it, and feeds on in the large and rich pasturage. But all have not this "meekness of wisdom." The prejudices of many are powerful, and quickly excited; and meeting with a passage in the beginning of a work—by no means essential to its design—they throw it instantly aside, and lose all the pleasure and benefit it would otherwise have afforded them.

The work will meet the wishes of those who have not the command of much time for private engagements. And this is the case with many in our day, not only from the avocations of civil life, but even from the calls of religious beneficence. More leisure, indeed, in many instances, may be secured, by earlier rising, and by more skill, and order, and diligence, in the management of all our affairs: yet the period in which we live, is peculiar; and the calls of God to labour in doing good, in so many civil and sacred charities, leave it not our duty, to retire and read by the hour as our forefathers did.

He hopes a book of this nature will be a suitable companion to those whose advanced years and infirmities will not allow of deep, and laborious, and lengthened perusals. What is preferable for them, is something easy, and short, and *very Scriptural.* It is observable how much more aged believers delight in God's word, than in reading any other works. It is their "necessary food," and their "dainty meat," when their appetite for other things fails. It is their solace, when the evil days are come in which they have no pleasure. It is their support, and their reliance in weakness and weariness; and they use it, not for amusement, but for relief only. Thus we have seen a man walking forth gaily in the morning, carrying his staff under his arm, or twirling it in his hand—

but worn with the toils and fatigues of the day: we have seen him returning home in the evening, leaning and pressing it, at every weary step.

The work also will suit the afflicted. Retirement and devotion seem congenial with trouble; and the sufferer naturally turns to them for succour and comfort. But many of the distresses of life prevent or abridge the resources they render so desirable and needful. What changes have many experienced, by losses and reductions! They are called from freedom and ease, to the care of thought, the shiftings of contrivance, and the exertion of labour. Where now is the leisure they once enjoyed, for their secluded employments of piety? Their hours of composure are fled, and have only left them hurried and broken moments. They can only sip of the brook in the way.

May the author presume that he may be of some little service to some of his brethren in the ministry: not only by aiding their retirement, as Christians—and they have to save themselves, as well as those that hear them—but by throwing out hints that may lead them to think for the pulpit, and furnishing, occasionally, outlines of discourses, which they can have the merit of filling up?

He cannot also but wish to be useful to another interesting class—the sources of our future families,

and the hopes of our churches. Here he is tempted to insert an extract from one of the letters he received, stimulating him to this undertaking. The name of the writer would add weight to his remarks; but it is suppressed, because he is not apprized of the liberty now taken—and his hints were not intended to meet the public eye. This excellent, and learned, and judicious friend thus expresses himself—"I have ventured to put upon paper, the idea I have conceived of a series of daily contemplations or reflections, which, among others, shall be adapted to be put into the hands of intelligent and educated *youth*. I have a sincere veneration for the intentions of Bogatzky, and other similar authors: but there is such a paucity of thought, such a poverty of expression, such a narrowed range of ideas, such a ringing of changes, incessantly, on a few topics, without gracefulness, or variety; as to render the books exceedingly unattractive to the present rising generation. In these cases, I conceive we are bound to provide—as far as we can; that the food presented to their minds may not disgust, by the manner in which it is served up; and that, when we put important truth in their way, it should be encumbered with as few external obstacles as the case will admit.—— Good sense, you have lately told us, is good taste: and that, I consider, is both good sense and good taste, in devotion, which would present to every mind—without the sacrifice of a particle of Divine truth,

such an exterior as may invite, rather than repulse. He who has once been effectually gained over to the love of the Gospel, will retain his affection for it under a very homely form; but he who has yet to be won, will require of us some attention, as to our first addresses, to his understanding and his heart.—My view, then, my dear sir, is, that the selection of texts should involve the whole range of revealed truth; and should present it in that combined form in which the Scripture exhibits it: where doctrine, and duty, and privilege, blend, like the colours that form the pure brightness of light: where religion is never exposed to view, as a bare skeleton; but as endued with all the properties of life, and in actual existence. Pithy sayings; wise experiences; urgent examples; faithful warnings: should revolve daily beneath the eye; and shew the reader, all that religion has done for others; all it aims to do for him; and all the evils that result from the absence of her beneficence. Testimonies, also, such as that of Chesterfield to the Vanity of the World, which he had so fully tried; dying experiences, such as that of Rochester; confessions of the value of religion, such as are found in the Letters of Burns; and passages from eminent and striking lives: might be introduced, in your own —— way, briefly prefaced or commented upon. Thus the whole might allure, by its variety; interest, by the reach of thought to which it leads; and profitably keep

before the mind of youth, amidst daily temptations, what religion *can* do for them, and what the world and other things never can do."

Perhaps, however, if I am not accused of vanity, in making this extract from my correspondent, I shall be chargeable with imprudence, in publishing a recommendation, which, though I admire, I have so much failed in following.

Percy Place; Dec. 26th, 1828.

CONTENTS.

Jan. 1.	Reflections for the New Year	Exod. xl. 2.
2.	The Divine Assurance	Gen. xxxii. 12.
3.	The Cessation of the Manna	Josh. v. 12.
4.	Seasonable Strength	Deut. xxxiii. 25.
5.	Self-Renunciation	Rev. iv. 10.
6.	The Heart united to Religion	Ps. lxxxvi. 11.
7.	Epenetus	Rom. xvi. 5.
8.	John's Friendship for Gaius.....	3 Epis. John 2.
9.	The perpetual Guide.....	Ps. xlviii. 14.
10.	The Character of Cornelius	Acts x. 2.
11.	The Dwelling-place of Jesus	John i. 38.
12.	God's Regard to Israel's Weakness	Exod. xiii. 17, 18.
13.	Repentance flowing from Mercy ..	Rom. ii. 4.
14.	The Birthday	Gen. xl. 20.
15.	Spiritual Devotion	Ps. xxv. 1.
16.	God's Thoughts	Jer. xxix. 11.
17.	The Use of the Law.....	Gal. iii. 24.
18.	Hope Exceeded.....	Gen. xlviii. 11.
19.	Noah's Walk	Gen. vi. 9.
20.	The Dove	Luke iii. 22.
21.	Moses apprized of his Death	Num. xxvii. 12, 13.
22.	The Scriptures opened	Luke xxiv. 32.
23.	The Spiritual Beggar	Luke xi. 9.
24.	The Blessed People	Ps. iii. 8.
25.	Joseph with his sick Father	Gen. xlviii. 1, 2.
26.	Heavenly Preparation	2 Cor. v. 5.
27.	The Healthful Inhabitant	Is. xxxiii. 24.
28.	The Tenderness of God's Care....	Deut. i. 31.

Jan.	29.	The Unlonely Solitude	John xiv. 32.
	30.	The Lovely Household.....	Acts x. 7, 8.
	31.	The Bitter Waters healed.....	Exod. xv. 25.
Feb.	1.	Faith questioned	John xvi. 31.
	2.	Creature Dissatisfaction	Ps. lv. 6.
	3.	Important Recollection.....	Deut. xxiv. 18.
	4.	Jacob's Prayer	Gen. xxxii. 9—12.
	5.	Union with Christ.....	1 Thess. v. 10.
	6.	The unlooked-for Companion	Luke xxiv. 13—1
	7.	The Impotent Man Tried.....	John v. 8.
	8.	Joseph in Prison	Gen. xxxix. 20.
	9.	Exultation in God.....	Ps. xxxiv. 2.
	10.	Sobriety.....	1 Thess. v. 8.
	11.	Children of the Day	1 Thess. v. 5.
	12.	Mutual Aid	Num. x. 31.
	13.	The Plaintive Prayer	Ps. xxv. 16, 17.
	14.	The Importance of Obedience	John xv. 14.
	15.	The Real Miracle	Acts iii. 9, 10.
	16.	The Three Heroes	Dan. iii. 12.
	17.	The Joyful Servant	Ps. lxxxvi. 6.
	18.	Paul wishing to see Rome	Rom. i. 10, 11.
	19.	Peter weeping	Mark xiv. 72.
	20.	Religious Growth	Mal. iv. 2.
	21.	The Discouraged Pilgrim.....	Num. xxi. 4.
	22.	Earthly Comforts blessed.....	Exod. xxiii. 25.
	23.	Conversion of a Sinner.....	James v. 20.
	24.	God's People glorified	Zech. ix. 16.
	25.	Paul's Salutation of the Romans ..	Rom. xvi. 15.
	26.	Jesus weeping over Jerusalem	Luke xix. 41.
	27.	Divine Knowledge.....	Col. i. 10.
	28.	The Love of Jesus to his own	John xiii. 1.
Mar.	1.	Desirable Fellowship.....	Num. x. 32.
	2.	Peter following afar off.....	Matt. xxvi. 58.
	3.	God only true	Rom. iii. 4.
	4.	Saints in the Lord's Hand	Deut. xxxiii. 3.
	5.	Flesh and Spirit	Rom. vii. 25.
	6.	The Heavenly Proposal	Deut. i. 21.
	7.	The Friends of Jesus.....	John xv. 15.
	8.	Union of Hope and Fear	Ps. xxxiii. 18.

Mar. 9.	Strength in the Lord	Eph. vi. 10.
10.	Robbery of God	Mal. iii. 8.
11.	Lovingkindnesses	Is. lxiii. 7.
12.	Mutual Service	Gal. v. 13.
13.	Fear forbidden	Deut. xx. 1.
14.	Paul's Desire	Phil. iii. 8.
15.	The Highest Prize	Phil. iii. 8.
16.	The Two Births	Gal. i. 15.
17.	Power and Goodness	Rom. x. 12.
18.	Peter and John	Acts iii. 1.
19.	Advantages of Inquiry	Deut. xxxii. 7.
20.	Daily Mercy	Ps. lxxxvi. 3.
21.	God's Joy in his People	Zeph. iii. 17.
22.	Trials not strange	1 Pet. iv. 12.
23.	Confidence from Knowledge	2 Tim. i. 12.
24.	Walking in God's Truth	Ps. lxxxvi. 11.
25.	The Privileges of the Upright	Ps. xxxvii. 18.
26.	God's Word and Works compared.	John xiv. 29.
27.	The Saviour's Agency	Mark vii. 37.
28.	Satan disappointed	John xiv. 30.
29.	The Gracious Purpose	1 Thess. v. 9.
30.	Departure of Christ desired	Matt. viii. 34.
31.	The Saviour's Obedience	John xiv. 31.
April 1.	The Bloody Sweat	Luke xxii. 44.
2.	The Saviour's Apprehension	John xviii. 7.
3.	The Saviour's Stipulation	John xviii. 8.
4.	The Death of Christ	Rom. v. 8.
5.	The Burial of Christ	1 Cor. xv. 4.
6.	Christ seen of numbers	1 Cor. xv. 6.
7.	The Holy One incorruptible	Ps. xvi. 10, 11.
8.	The Grand Attainment	Phil. iii. 11.
9.	Death and Life with Christ	Rom. vi. 8.
10.	The Glory that followed	1 Pet. i. 11.
11.	Character of Gospel Times	Zech. iii. 10.
12.	Justification free	Rom. iii. 24.
13.	The Saviour's Attraction	Zech. iii. 9.
14.	Creature-Dependence vain	Lam. iv. 20.
15.	The Sad Defection	Matt. xxvi. 56.
16.	Christians not comfortless	John xiv. 18.
17.	The Divine Engraving	Zech. iii. 9.

Apr. 18.	The Leaven in the Meal	Matt. xiii. 23.
19.	Love to the Brethren	1 John iii. 16.
20.	Christ praying in his Agony	Luke xxii. 44.
21.	Seeking Christ Crucified	Matt. xxviii. 5.
22.	The Rising and Resting Prayer	Num. x. 35, 36.
23.	David's Resolution	Ps. lxi. 2, 3.
24.	Too late	Luke xix. 42.
25.	Early Rising	Mark i. 35.
26.	The Learner	Luke viii. 35.
27.	Members one of another	1 Cor. xi. 20.
28.	Christ leaving this World	John xiii. 1.
29.	Angelic Succour	Luke xxii. 43.
30.	Peter remembered	Mark xvi. 7.
May 1.	Vineyards in the Wilderness	Hos. ii. 15.
2.	Dedication of David's House	Ps. xxx.
3.	The Divine Revelation	Gal. i. 16.
4.	Self-pleasing renounced	Rom. xv. 3.
5.	The One Thing Needful	John iv. 10.
6.	The Seat of Prayer	2 Sam. vii. 27.
7.	The Sun of Righteousness	Mal. iv. 2.
8.	Looking for God	Is. viii. 17.
9.	Daniel Delivered	Dan. vi. 23.
10.	The Departure from Egypt	Exod. xiii. 18, 19.
11.	The Cripple holds Peter and John.	Acts iii. 13.
12.	The Angry Disciples reproved	Luke ix. 52—56.
13.	Divine Relief	Rom. vii. 25.
14.	Passing under the Rod	Ezek. xx. 37.
15.	The Bonds of the Covenant	Ezek. xx. 37.
16.	Christ going up to Jerusalem	Luke ix. 51.
17.	Strong Faith	Dan. iii. 17, 18.
18.	Good to be here	Matt. xvii. 4.
19.	Washing the Disciples' Feet	John xiii. 4, 5.
20.	An Interest in Christ ascertained	2 Cor. ix. 15.
21.	The Day of Rejoicing	Phil. ii. 16.
22.	Justification by Faith	Gal. ii. 16.
23.	The Only Master	Matt. xxiii. 8.
24.	Wishing to go over Jordan	Deut. iii. 25.
25.	Grieving the Spirit	Ephes. iv. 30.
26.	Christ's Inheritance	Ps. ii. 8.
27.	The Tongue loosed	Matt. ix. 33.

May 28.	Knowledge increased	2 Pet. iii. 18.
29.	God's Offspring	Deut. xiv. 1.
30.	Prayer indispensable.....	Ps. ii. 8.
31.	The Food blessed	Luke xxiv. 30.
June 1.	The Vine	John xv. 5.
2.	The Branches	John xv. 5.
3.	Our Hope	1 Tim. i. 1.
4.	The Waterpot left.....	John iv. 28.
5.	The Morning Arm.....	Is. xxxiii. 2.
6.	Humble Walking	Micah vi. 8.
7.	The Lord our Judge.....	Is. xxxii. 22.
8.	Grace in Christ.....	2 Tim. ii. 1.
9.	Piety and Charity	Acts iii. 2.
10.	Delighting in Mercy.....	Micah vii. 18.
11.	Isaac old and dim	Gen. xxvii. 1—4
12.	The Fiery Cloudy Pillar	Exod. xiii. 21, 2
13.	Sins punished and improved.....	Num. xvi. 38.
14.	Ignorance of Christ	John xiv. 9.
15.	The Nations divided.....	Deut. xxxii. 8.
16.	God's Lovingkindness	Ps. xxvi. 3.
17.	The Value of the Saviour	Lam. iv. 20.
18.	Paul at Tent-making.....	Acts xviii. 1—3.
19.	The Strength of Grace	2 Tim. ii. 1.
20.	The Blessed Heritage	Ps. lxi. 5.
21.	Satan Resisted	Ephes. iv. 27.
22.	Conversion of the Samaritaness ..	John iv. 34.
23.	The God of Nature and Grace....	Ps. xxix. 11.
24.	Conversion of the Corinthians	Acts xviii. 7, 8.
25.	God choosing our Resting-place ..	Num. x. 33.
26.	Christ talking with the Woman....	John iv. 27.
27.	A Shadow from the Heat.....	Is. xxv. 4.
28.	The Divine Enquiry.....	1 Kings xix. 9.
29.	Paul encouraged at Corinth	Acts xviii. 9, 10
30.	The gladdening River	Ps. xlvi. 4.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

The CHRISTIAN Contemplated in a COURSE of LECTURES. Fourth Edition. 12*s.*

TWO VOLUMES of SERMONS. Fourth Edition. £1. 1*s.*

FOUR VOLUMES of SHORT DISCOURSES, for the USE of FAMILIES. Fourth Edition. £1. 16*s.*

The DOMESTIC MINISTER's ASSISTANT; or, PRAYERS for the Use of FAMILIES. Eleventh Edition. 9*s.*

A SERMON on the DUTIES of HUSBANDS and WIVES. Seventh Edition. 1*s.* 6*d.*

MEMOIRS, SINGLE SERMONS, and ESSAYS.

MORNING EXERCISES

FOR THE CLOSET.

JANUARY 1.—"*On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle.*" Exodus xl. 2.

AND why was this period chosen for the erection? God has always reasons for his conduct; but He does not always "give account of any of his matters." We may, however, make two remarks here. First. Things that are the same to God, are not the same to us. Our goodness extendeth not to Him: religion regards the exigencies of man: and when these are subserved, its provisions will be needless. John saw no temple in the New Jerusalem. All places are alike to God; yet we never feel in a common dwelling, the solemnity that seizes us in the sanctuary. The first day of the year was no more to God than any other; but it would render the service more memorable and impressive to the people; therefore says He, "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle." Secondly. It is well to begin a new year with some good work; and to commence serving God after a new manner.

And have *we* no tabernacle to set up on this first day of this first month?

Let us begin the year with solemn reflection—and say, with Job, "when a few years are come I shall

go the way whence I shall not return." Let me not only believe this; but think of it, and feel the importance of the sentiment. Yes, in a little time I shall be no more seen. How? Where? shall I be disposed of? The seasons will return as before: but the places that now know me, will know me no more for ever. Will this be a curse? or a blessing? If I die in my sins, I shall return no more to my possessions and enjoyments; to the calls of mercy; to the throne of grace; to the house of prayer! If I die in the Lord, I shall (O blessed impossibility!) return no more to these thorns and briers; to this vain and wicked world; to this aching head; to this throbbing heart; to these temptations, and troubles, and sorrows, and sins.

Let us begin the year with self-inspection—and say, with the chief butler, "I do remember my faults this day." We are prone to think of the failings of our fellow-creatures, and often imagine, because we are free from *their* faults, that we are faultless: but we may have other faults; we may have worse; and while a mote is in our brother's eye, a beam may be in our own. Let us be open to conviction. Let us deal faithfully with our own hearts. Let us not compare ourselves with others, and especially the more vile of our fellow-creatures; but with our advantages; with our knowledge; with our professions; with the law of God.

Let us begin the year with a determination to abandon whatever appears sinful—and say, with Elihu, "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Should the evil course or the evil passion solicit, let it plead in vain, while the Saviour-Judge says—"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Begin the year with pious and personal dedication and say, with David, "Lord, I am thine; save me." hrough Him, who is the way, yield yourselves unto God. ; is your reasonable service. He has infinite claims you. You will never be truly your own till you are his.

Begin the year with relative religion; and if the orship of God has never been established in your mily, now commence it—and say, with Joshua, "As r me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." A mily without prayer, is like a house without a roof. t is uncovered and exposed: and we know who has hreatened to pour out his fury upon the families that all not upon his Name.

Begin the year with fresh concern to be useful—nd ask, with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou ave me to do?" Let me look at my condition; my esources; my opportunities. How can I glorify God nd promote the welfare of my fellow-creatures? Is here not a Bible to spread? Are there not Mis-ionaries to support? Are there none perishing for ack of knowledge that I can instruct? Have I no rreligious neighbours to reclaim? Are there no poor o relieve? No widows and fatherless to visit?

Begin the year with more conduct in the arrange-nent of your affairs—and resemble Ezra and his rethren, who "did according to the custom, as he duty of every day required." God has said, let very thing be done decently, and in order. Much of our comfort will arise from regularity in your meals, n your devotions, in your callings; and your piety vill be aided by it. Have a place to receive every hing; an end to simplify it; a rule to arrange it. eave nothing for the morrow that ought to be dis-harged to-day: sufficient for each period will be ts own claims; and your mind ought to be always t liberty to attend to fresh engagements.

Finally. Time, this short, this uncertain, this all-mportant time, upon every instant of which eternity epends, will not allow of our trifling away any of

its moments. Resolve therefore to redeem it. Gather up its fragments, that nothing be lost. Especially rescue it from needless sleep; and if you have hitherto accustomed yourself to the shameful indulgence of lying late in bed, begin the new year with the habit of early rising; by which you will promote your health, and improvement of every kind, and live much longer than others in the same number of days—and say, with David, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

And if this be your determination, the season will be the date of your happiness; and God himself says, "From this day will I bless you."

JAN. 2.—"*I will surely do thee good.*"
Gen. xxxii. 12.

THIS is a blessed assurance with which to enter a new year, not knowing what a day may bring forth. But what have *we* to do with this promise? It was indeed given immediately to Jacob; but it equally belongs to every Israelite indeed; for He never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me, in vain. Promises made on particular occasions are intended for general use and advantage. Paul, referring to the words with which God had encouraged Joshua, applies them to the believing Hebrews: "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that *we* may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." And Hosea, alluding to God's intercourse with Jacob even at Bethel, says, "And there He talked with *us*."

The very brevity of the promise is a recommendation. We complain of our memories; but surely

: can retain these six golden words, "I WILL SURELY) THEE GOOD." It is also the better for being definite. Some promises ensure an individual essing: but we are a mass of wants; and this surance is a comforter that meets every fear, every ıxiety, every wish. It sets the mind completely rest with regard to any possible contingencies. It lls us to be "careful for nothing." It enjoins us to cast all our care upon Him, for *He* careth for us." ut though, specifying nothing in particular, the romise leaves our hope to range at large—yet it is) keep within the compass of our *real* welfare. They that seek the Lord shall not want any *good* ıing." "I will surely do thee *good*."

Now the meaning of this assurance must be under-tood, or else we shall find it impossible to harmonize ; with experience. The people of the world have often eproached those who profess to be the blessed of the ord, with their poverty and distress; and have asked, Where is *now* your God?" And they themselves have ometimes been perplexed and dismayed. Gideon said, If God be with us, why then is all this evil befallen s?" And Jacob said, "All these things are against ıe." In an agreeable mansion, and enjoying all the omforts of life, no difficulty may be felt from the ınguage of God: but what is Joseph in prison? what s Job among the ashes? what is he who says, all the ay long have I been plagued, and chastened every ıorning? what is *he* to make of the promise—"I will urely do thee good?" We must confide in the ıdgment of God, and distrust our own. We are hort-sighted; and easily imposed upon by appear-nces; and know not what is good for us in this vain ife, which we spend as a shadow. But *He* cannot be nistaken. A wise father will choose far better for ıis infant, than the infant can choose for himself. We must always distinguish between what is pleasing ınd what is profitable. Correction is not agreeable o the child; yet it is so good for him, that he who

spareth the rod, hateth his son. Medicine is unpalatable; but it is good for the patient, and renewed health will more than reconcile him even to the expence of it. The vine-dresser does the tree good, not by suffering the wanton shoots to grow on, draining the sap, but by pruning it, that it may bring forth more fruit. What said David? "It is good for me"—that I have prospered? that I have risen from obscurity? that I conquered Goliath? that I got such a victory in the Valley of Salt? No: but, It is good for me—that Doeg impeached me, that Saul hunted me like a partridge on the mountains, that Absalom drove me from my palace, that Shimei cursed me on the hill, that sickness brought down my life to the ground: "it is good for me that I have been afflicted."—We must also look to the conclusion of events. Things good in themselves, with regard to us, may result in evil: and things evil in themselves, may issue in good. Abraham spake according to our present estimations, when he said to the rich man, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things." But had we known them both before death, and been assured that so soon would the one have been comforted, and the other tormented, we should have judged the poverty and distresses of Lazarus to have been the "good things," and the wealth and luxury of the rich man the "evil things." All is ill that ends ill: and all is well that ends well.

But let us believe the truth of this declaration. There are four steps by which we may reach the conclusion. The first regards his sufficiency. He is *able* to do us good. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. There is no enemy but he can conquer; no exigency but he can relieve. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can *ask* or *think*.—The second regards his inclination. He is *disposed* to do us good. His love is not only real, but passes knowledge. He feels towards us as his jewels, his friends, his children, his bride.

He rests in his love, and joys over us with singing.—The third regards his engagement. He is *bound* to do us good. We have not only his word, but his oath; an oath sworn by himself, because he could swear by no greater; and confirmed by the blood of an infinite sacrifice.—The fourth regards his conduct. He *has* done us good. We have had complaints enough to make of others; but of Him, we are compelled to say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord." His goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives. How often has he turned the shadow of death into the morning!

But when I look at the cross, I see that he *has* done already far *more* than remains to *be* done. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

JAN. 3.—"*And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*" Jos. v. 12.

THIS cessation of the manna is one of the several remarkable occurrences at the crossing of the river Jordan. God is every thing to his people. In the wilderness they had no path-way; but he led them in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. They were in danger; but he was their defence. They had no abode; but he was their dwelling-place. They had no water; but he gave them streams in the desert. They had no provision; but he rained down manna around their tents. So that what nature refused, Providence furnished; and what could not be derived from the ground came from the clouds.

When the supplies they brought with them from Egypt were spent, they feared they were going to

perish. They forgot the hand that had dried up the sea; and said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? But he gave them bread from heaven, and for forty years they did eat angels' food. What an abundance was necessary for such a multitude. And what a display of divine power was here witnessed!—Nor less was it a proof of divine mercy. Had he dealt with them after their desert, fire would have come down from heaven, instead of food: but as the mother silences the fretful angry child by giving it not the rod, but the breast, so did his gentleness indulge them. Hence, when they despised the manna as light food, it might have been suspended, and they might have been left to learn the worth of it by the want: but day after day, year after year, it continued to attend them, and ceased not till the day after they had taken possession of their inheritance, and they had eaten of the old corn of the land.

At length it *did* cease; and wisely too. What was necessary before became needless now: and what want had endeared, abundance would have despised. This teaches us not to look for extraordinary supplies, when relief is to be had in an ordinary way. He who sustained Israel, is as almighty as ever; but *we* must plow, and sow, and gather into barns. He who fed Elijah by ravens, commands *us* to labour, working with our own hand the thing that is good. If a man neglects the means of subsistence, he is not trusting Providence, but tempting it; and is likely to be reminded by something more than Scripture, that if any man will not work, neither shall he eat. Even in miraculous achievements, what human agency *could* do, was not done supernaturally. When Peter was in prison, the angel of the Lord opened the door and broke off his fetters—for this Peter could not have done; but he did not take him up in his arms, and carry him out; but said unto him, "follow me." Miracles were never

needlessly employed; and had they been common, they would have ceased to be marvellous: the exceptions would have become a general rule; and the whole system of Nature and Providence have been deranged.

The manna was typical. "*I* am," said Jesus, "that bread of life." As the manna came down from heaven and preserved the Israelites from famine; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And the Saviour surpasses the emblem. The manna was for the body; he saves the soul. The manna could not preserve from death always; but they who partake of him, live for ever. The manna was confined to *one* people; he gave his flesh for the life of the world. He, therefore, is the *true* bread.

And shall this cease? Far from it. You shall live by him, as well as with him, for ever.

Yet there will be a great difference between your present and your future experience. Many things now necessary will then be done away. Conjecture, opinion, reasoning, will give place to knowledge. Now we walk by faith, then we shall walk by sight. Now we are saved by hope; then hope will cease in fruition. Love will continue for ever; but charity and mercy can have no object, no exercise there. We shall be still praising him; but prayer, and preaching, and baptism, and the Lord's supper, will have no place. We can dispense with the channels, when we are at the fountain-head; and with the types, when we have the reality. We are now glad when they say unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord;" but says John, "I saw no temple there; but the glory of God and of the Lamb were the light thereof." When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part will be done away; and the fare of the wilderness will be superseded by the produce of Canaan.

JAN. 4.—"*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" Deut. xxxiii. 25.

DR. Doddridge was one day walking much depressed, his very heart desolate within him. But, says he, passing a cottage door open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead. Much is often done by a word: and many can say, with Watts,

"And when my spirit takes her fill
"At some good word of thine,
"Not warriors, who divide the spoil,
"Have joys compared with mine."

And what does *this* word say to *us*? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." There is strength bodily. The continuance of this is a mercy. How soon, how easily may it be crushed or reduced, so that we may be made to possess months of vanity; and endure wearisome nights; and feel every exertion a difficulty, and every duty a burden. But there is strength spiritual. This is very distinguishable from the former, and often found separate from it. The Lord does not always give his people a giant's arm, or an iron sinew; but *His* strength is made perfect in weakness. This is the strength here spoken of; and for two purposes his people will find it necessary: *service* and *suffering*.

Every Christian has a course of duty common to him as a man; which is, to provide for his outward wants, and the support of his family. And this is done by labour, in which he is required not to be slothful. But there is a series of duties pertaining more immediately to him in his religious character; to believe, to pray, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. The discharge of this high calling is sometimes expressed by a race, which he is to run with patience. Sometimes, also, by the life

of a soldier. A soldier must not be effeminate, but endure hardness and fatigue. Even his preparations and exercises are often trying—how much more his actual services! And the Christian's enemies possess every thing that can render them formidable—and so fights he, not as one that beateth the air.

Suffering is commonly connected with service in the divine life. It was so invariably in the beginning of the Gospel. Then it was deemed impossible for any one to live godly in Christ Jesus and not suffer persecution. Therefore, no sooner was Paul converted, than he was told how great things he had to suffer. As real religion is always the same, some degree of the same opposition may be always looked for; and the hatred of the world *will* be shewn as far as they have liberty to express it, and are not restrained by law, or the usages of civilized life. But when the Christian has rest from such trials as these, God can subserve their purpose, by personal and relative afflictions, which are often severer than even the endurings of a martyr. They are called chastenings and rebukes, which he is neither to despise, or faint under. They have been the experience of all his children from age to age. They are not wantonly inflicted; but there is a needs be for them, of which their Heavenly Father is the unerring judge; and who—as far as their education and welfare will allow—will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Now the prospect of all this, when he looks forward into life, is enough to awaken the Christian's anxiety; and nothing can effectually encourage him but the discovery of strength equal to his exigencies. And this he finds not in *himself*. The natural man has no sensibility of his weakness, because he is not earnestly engaged in those applications which require spiritual strength. But the Christian is. He knows that he is as destitute of strength as he is of righteousness. He feels himself entirely insufficient for

all the duties and trials of the divine life. And the consciousness, instead of diminishing, grows with the experience of every day.

And he need not be afraid of this. Rather let him cherish it; for when he is weak, then is he strong. What he wants is provided and ensured by the promise of a God who cannot lie. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God. His veracity has been attested by all his people, not one failing. And what says our own experience? "Year after year I have been travelling in an enemy's country, and carrying with me an evil heart, prone to depart from the living God. I have often said, I shall one day perish. But where am I this morning?—Following hard after God, his right hand upholding me. My prayers have not been always lively and delightful; but I have looked again towards his holy temple; and through many a benighted hour I have waited for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning. I have had no might of my own, and have been often faint; but he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. This is my testimony to the praise of the glory of his grace,—and at the beginning of another year, I thank God, and take courage.

"Here I raise mine Ebenezer:
"Hither, by thy help, I'm come;
"And I hope, by thy good pleasure,
"Safely to arrive at home."

JAN. 5.—"*And they cast their crowns before the throne.*" Rev. iv. 10.

RELIGION distinguishes and elevates. The possessors of it begin to rise on earth; but their dignity is perfected and displayed in heaven.

There they are *crowned.* Racers were crowned. onquerors were crowned. Benefactors, who had ıved the life of a fellow-citizen, were crowned. ridegrooms were crowned——Solomon's mother rowned him in the day of his espousals. Princes, n their ascension, were crowned. The saints on igh are every one of these, in themselves; and he crown each wears is called "a crown of righte- usness;" "a crown of life;" "a crown of glory hat fadeth not away;" a crown divinely superior o the prize of mortal ambition—"Now they do it o obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incor- uptible."

But if they are thus honoured, "they cast their rowns before the throne" they approach; testify- ng by this action, from whom they have received hem, and confessing that they deem themselves nworthy to wear the honour "before the presence of his glory"—all, all in conformity with the pecu- iar design of the Gospel-constitution, "that no flesh hould glory in *his presence,*" but, "according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

It is no easy thing to bring a man to this temper of mind. It is not natural to him. Naturally, he is as proud as he is poor. Therefore he would be wise, though born as a wild ass's colt. Therefore, though poverty itself, he says, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. Therefore, though without strength, he trusts in his own heart; and though guilty before God, he goes about to establish his own righteousness. Therefore, he is impatient under his affliction, as if he had a right to complain; and unthankful under his mercies, as if he deserved them.

The day of conviction is a day of self-abasement; and in that day the lofty looks of man are brought low. Then he submits himself to God, and begins to walk humbly with him: he admires the patience that has borne with him, and adores the abundant

mercy that has saved and called him. The more he advances in the divine life, the more he sinks in his own estimation. "I, who am but dust and ashes." "Behold, I am vile." "Who am I, and what is my father's house?" "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies." "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." The "latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." "I am not worthy to be called an apostle." "I am less than the least of all saints."—These have been the self-annihilations of men who were all great in the sight of the Lord: and these must be the best proofs, as they will be the certain effects of *our* growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

Ignorance is the pedestal of pride; throw down the basis, and the figure falls. But here our knowledge is not complete; hereafter we shall see things in God's own light. Then we shall have other views than we now have, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; of the number and aggravations of our offences; of the greatness of our guilt and desert; of the vastness of our obligations; of the wonders of that love that passeth knowledge in every part of our salvation. Thence will result that fine ingenuous feeling that shrinks back, and is ready to decline a distinguished privilege—not from dislike or unwillingness to be under obligation; but from a sense of unworthiness, increased by immediate contrast with the object. Did Peter wish to be abandoned of Christ? Yea, he placed all his happiness in his presence—but it was under this feeling, on the sight of the miracle, he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Some would not think of such abdications, were they to enter heaven with their present principles and dispositions; they would rather view their crowns as of their own deserving, and their own procuring: and feel the spirit of a late emperor,

who, too proud to receive *his* diadem from any other hand than his own, placed himself the crown upon his head. But that world is a world of humility and gratitude. All the dignitaries there cast their crowns before the throne of the Saviour in whose righteousness they are exalted—still praising *him*, and saying—"not unto us, O Lord, not unto *us*, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake."

Now, whatever Heaven is, we must be disposed and prepared for it before we can enter it. Has then God wrought us for the self-same thing? Has he brought down the pride of our nature, and made us willing to "submit ourselves unto the righteousness of God?" Are we saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ?" Is the leading sentiment of the BLESSED, now living in our hearts, and reigning in our lives? "BY THE GRACE OF God I AM WHAT I AM. NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS WITH ME."

JAN. 6.—"*Unite my heart to fear thy Name.*" Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

THE fear of God does not here mean a particular grace of the Spirit, but religion at large. It is common to all writers to express the whole of a thing, by a part; but then it ought to be an essential, and a distinguishing part. And "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and "we perfect holiness, in the fear of God."

Religion is nothing without the heart. Yet naturally the heart is alienated from the life of God, and hangs off loosely and carelessly from all the spiritualities of his service. But it must be drawn and

attached to divine things; and God alone can accomplish this union. Without his agency indeed, there may be an outward, and professional union; but the ligatures of faith and love which are in Christ Jesus, will be wanting. To him therefore must we give the glory of the work, if it has been effected, and to him we must repair if we desire to experience it; encouraged by the assurance that he will not fail to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

But how may I know that he has united my heart to his fear? When we are attached to a thing, we love to hear of it; we think much of it; speak much of it: we delight to remember it. If we are cordially united to an individual, he shares our sympathy; we feel his interests to be our own; we weep when he weeps; and rejoice when he rejoices. It is the same with a man that is cordially attached to religion; he feels himself to be one with it: when it is assailed, he will endeavour to defend it; when it is wounded in the house of its friends, he will feel the pain: the reproach of it will be his burden; he will pray for its success; he will exult in its prosperity. Are we cordially united to any one? In the same degree we dislike absence, and dread separation. Thus the attached Ruth said to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried." And what is the language of a soul under this divine influence? "Why shouldst thou be a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" "Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

But was not David's heart united to the fear of

God BEFORE? It was. But he who has the dawn, wishes for the day. He in whom the good work is begun, will always pray, "Perfect that which concerneth me." Who can say, I have attained, I am already perfect? David, as a blackslider, prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" but there was no period in his life, or advancement in his religion, at which he would not have used the very same prayer.

"Whoever says, 'I want *no more*,'
"Confesses he has *none*."

The Christian, as long as he feels any reluctance to duty; any dulness in his work; any distractions in his worship; any law in his members warring against the law of his mind; any reason to sigh, "When I would do good, evil is present with me, and how to perform that which is good I find not"—will not cease to pray, "Unite my heart to fear thy Name."

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
"And cold my warmest thought;
"But when I see Thee as thou art,
"I'll praise Thee as I ought."

JAN. 7.—"*Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ.*" Rom. xvi. 5.

PAUL here remembers many, and speaks of them all with affection; but he salutes Epenetus as his WELL-*beloved.* We are not bound to love all in the same manner, or in the same degree.

The Apostle calls this convert, "fruits unto *Christ*"—not unto *himself.* Yet he had been the means of bringing him to the knowledge of the truth. But Paul knew that *he* had not redeemed

him; justified him; called him by his grace. And as to his conversion, he had only been the *instrument*, the Lord working with him, and confirming his word with signs following. In another place he says, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" If converted sinners are the seal and reward and glory and joy of the preacher; they are infinitely more so, of the Saviour himself. *He* sees in them his agency; his image; the travail of his soul; the recompence of his sufferings. He will enjoy their blessedness, as the author of it; and receive their praises for ever.

Epenetus is here said to be the "*first*-fruits unto Christ in *Achaia*." Yet he says to the Corinthians, "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that *it* is the first-fruits of Achaia." The apparent difficulty is easily solved by the fact, that the house of Stephanas was the first family that was converted, but that Epenetus was the first convert in the family. Christians at first were few in number, and driven together by persecution. They were, therefore, well known to each other, and to their ministers. They were marked characters. The conversion of a man to Christianity in a heathen place, must have been peculiarly *observable*. It was the production of "a new creature," which would of course be greatly wondered at. It was displaying the "heavenly" where all was "earthly, and sensual, and devilish," before. And we see it was *worthy* of attention. Earthly minds are most interested by the events of this life; by the policy of statesmen, the exploits of heroes, the discoveries of philosophers—but what Paul noticed in Achaia, was the first man that was called there out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. He knew that the conversion of one soul far transcended in importance, the deliverance of a whole kingdom from civil bondage. Kingdoms will soon be no more; but such a soul will shine a monument of grace and

glory for ever and ever. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

How long Epenetus, in the place and in the family, stood *alone* as a professed Christian, we know not; but it is no uncommon thing for an individual to be similarly situated. We have often seen single converts seeking and serving Christ, as the first-fruits of the neighbourhood, or the household, wherein they lived. The way in which, and the means by which these persons are brought forward before others, would, if stated, be found to be very various, and often remarkable. Hearing the Gospel while from home; visiting in a family where the worship of God is maintained; meeting with a good book; a letter from a friend; a conversation with a stranger; an affliction that made the heart bleed, and laid bare the prospects of life—where shall we end? "Lo! all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." For though the incidents upon which this mighty event hinged, seemed perfectly casual, they were all arranged by his own purpose and grace.

And the circumstances in which these *first* converts are placed, are a post of *trial;* and sometimes the trial is very severe. They have to take up their cross daily, and hourly too; and a cross too heavy to be borne without divine aid. Little do many who have been religiously brought up, and whose relations and friends, if not decidedly pious, are not hostile—little do they know what some have to endure, especially at the commencement of their religious course; when, instead of assistance and countenance (so much needed), they meet with neglect, and opposition, and sneers, and reproach from all around them—and from all that are dear to them.

— They are also in a post of *duty*; and are required to be, not only harmless and blameless

but most exemplary in their language, temper, and conduct. The reason is, that they will attract peculiar notice. Every thing they do, will be canvassed by a shrewdness sharpened by enmity, and ready to magnify every failing. *They* will be judged by their profession; and their religion will be judged by *them*. And they are to put gainsayers to silence, and constrain them, by their good works which they behold, to glorify God in the day of visitation. They are to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; and by walking in wisdom, to win those that are without. They are not to repulse by rudeness, or chill by disdain. They are never to betray a feeling that says, Stand by thyself; come not near to me—I am holier than thou. They are not, by stiffness and affectations in little and lawful things, to lead people to suppose that their religion is made up of oddities and perverseness. Yet, in things of unquestionable obligation and real importance, they must be firm and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: for not only will conscience require this, in the testimony they are always to bear for God; but such *consistency* alone will enthrone them in the convictions and esteem of others.

—For they are also in a post of *honour*. They have a peculiar opportunity of showing their principles. Later converts may be equally conscientious, but *these* coming after, when they have the sanction and co-operation of others, cannot so obviously appear to be on the Lord's side, nor so fully evince the purity and power of their motives, as those who came forward *alone*, and say to all others, however numerous, however influential, however endeared—Choose you this day whom you will serve—but as for me—I will serve the Lord. They have therefore, the privilege of taking the lead, and of being examples instead of followers. And they may be, and are likely to be, the means of prevailing upon *others*. We have seldom seen an instance of failure.

The effect has not always immediately appeared; but where they have been enabled to walk worthy of God unto all pleasing, after awhile, they have no longer gone *alone* to the Cross of Christ, to the Throne of Grace, to the House of God, but in company—in company even with those who once stood aloof, or before even opposed. And "he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

JAN. 8.—"*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*" 3d Epis. John,2.

IT has been supposed from hence, that Gaius had an infirm and sickly constitution. This is probable; but is does not necessarily follow: for John might have wished him the continuance and increase of health, as well as the restoration of it.

However this may be, we learn from his language—That it is aliowable for us to pray for temporal blessings—and, that of all these blessings, health is the most valuable and necessary.

But is outward prosperity—is even health itself the chief good—that "above all things" he wishes his friend to enjoy it? Some, therefore, have rendered it, "I wish above all persons;" others, "I wish in all respects;" that thon mayest prosper and be in health. But there is no need of criticism here. Gaius had grace already; and a high degree of it: and this one thing needful being secured, it was *then* supremely desirable that he should have health to enjoy and improve it—"even as his soul prospered."

John makes, also, his soul-prosperity the standard and rule of his prayer for other things. This would

be a dreadful rule with regard to many. Such praying, if answered, would ruin them. Yes, if they were to prosper in temporal things *as* they prosper in spiritual, they would become the poorest, meanest wretches on earth; for they are strangers to every thing like the true riches. And if their bodies were to be as healthful *as* their souls, their dwelling would become an hospital; their bed of ease, a bed of languishing—they would be blind, for they have no spiritual understanding; deaf, for they never hear the voice of God; dead, for the Spirit of God is not in them.

Yet this seems to be the only safe rule. For unless religion keeps pace with our outward good, our safety and welfare will be endangered by it. We are not afraid when we see Christians succeeding in life, if at the same time they grow in grace. But the peril is, when there is so much sail, and so little ballast. What can be more awful than to see those, who too much mind earthly things, gaining abundantly; to see those, who have a relish for the pride of life, enabled to be splendid; to see those much indulged, who cannot put a knife to the throat of appetite. If our plenty and dainties awaken in us no moral apprehensions; and if we can feast ourselves without fear; surely our table is likely to become a snare, and that which should have been for our welfare to become a trap. The prosperity of fools destroys them; and the prosperity of those who have not *much* wisdom, injures them.

Let us, therefore, examine our wishes. Let us regulate them piously. Let us seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Let us ask for no more of other things than we can bear—ever praying for our friends and ourselves, that we may prosper and be in health even as our *souls prosper*.

JAN. 9.—"*He will be our guide even unto death.*" Psalm xlviii. 14.

HIS assurance comes home to our case and feelings. We are strangers and pilgrims upon earth. We resemble the Jews in the wilderness; we are not in Egypt, and we are not in Canaan, but journeying from the one to the other. We are delivered from our natural state; but before we can enter glory,

"We have this desert world to pass;
"A dangerous and a tiresome place."

And as the Jews were not left to themselves, but had a conductor, so have we—"This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." How perfectly, how infinitely qualified is he for this office! In a journey, it is unnecessary for the traveller to know the road: but the guide ought to know it; and when *he* is well acquainted with it, and we have full confidence in him, we shall feel satisfaction, notwithstanding our own ignorance. Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went; but he knew *with whom:* and Job, after expressing his perplexities, and the successlessness of his efforts to explore the dispensation he was under, relieves himself with this thought: "But he knoweth the way that I take."

"Oh, who so fit to choose our lot,
"And regulate our ways,"

as he who sees the end from the beginning; who knows all our walking through this great wilderness; who cannot mistake as to what is good or evil for us; and who has said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." If we had a

wise and sure, but a sullen and silent leader, it would deduct much from the pleasure of the journey. But our guide indulges us with constant intercourse. He allows us to address *him* whenever we please, and in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known our requests; while he condescendingly addresses *us*, talking with us by the way, and opening to us the Scriptures. He is also equal to all our exigencies. Do we want food, refreshment, rest? He can supply all our need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Have we storms? "He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Are we exposed to enemies? What David said to Abiathar, who had fled to him in his jeopardy, HE says to us, "Abide with me; for he that seeketh thy life seeketh my life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." I should not be afraid of the sights and howlings of the wood, if I had a lion at my right hand every step, and could depend upon his fidelity—A lion is the strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any. More than this, is our privilege.

"A thousand savage beasts of prey
"Around the forest roam,
"But Judah's Lion guards the way,
"And guides the traveller home."

What human patience could bear with our manners and provocations? What creature-conductor is there, but would throw up his charge, long before the journey's end? But he does not cast away his people. He *never leaves* nor forsakes them. This is their comfort; this is their hope; this is their security—the long-suffering of our God is salvation. "I, the Lord, change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Yes—he will be our guide, "even unto death;" that is, till the journey is over, and all its cares cease. But is nothing more necessary? TO death is much, but THROUGH death seems better. When

we come to the entrance of the gloomy passage, it is pleasing to think that he is at the other side, and will receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also. But how am I to get THROUGH? "My flesh and my heart faileth."

> "Oh, if my Lord would *come*, and MEET—
> "My soul would stretch her wings in haste:
> "Fly fearless through Death's iron gate,
> "Nor feel the terrors as she pass'd."

Well, this case is provided for. All is insured. He will be with us THROUGH—"Yea, though I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou *art with me:* thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."—*Amen.*

JAN. 10.—"*A devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house; which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.*" Acts x. 2.

WE should beware of general and indiscriminate reflections upon communities and professions. They are injurious; they tend to make and keep the parties what they find they are generally supposed to be. They are unjust; for there are always exceptions. And they are ungenerous; for the more temptations men have to resist, the more evils they have to subdue, the more difficulties they have to struggle with—the more deserving and commendable is the individual that succeeds; or rather, the more is the grace of God glorified in him. Can there be no excellency connected with arms? In the New Testament we meet with no less than four centurions, and all are spoken of with approbation—the centurion who came to our Lord on the behalf of his servant—the centurion that watched and confessed at the Cross—the cen-

turion that behaved so courteously to Paul in his voyage—and Cornelius, here spoken of.

He is supposed to have been a proselyte, but he was not. Yet he worshipped God, the knowledge of whom he probably obtained by residing with his men in Judea.—He was a "devout man;" and three fine unions are mentioned in his character and conduct.

— A union of *personal* and *relative duty*: "*He* feared God, *with* all his house." This was like Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord:"—not my house without myself, nor myself without my house; but I, *and* my house. If we are godly ourselves, we shall surely give evidence of it by instructing, and admonishing, and impressing those who are placed under our care. And in vain shall we use the means, if we counteract them by our own example. We must do, as well as teach.

— A union of *piety* and *morality*: he *gave alms* and *prayed*. Piety is more than prayer; and morality is more than alms: yet alms and prayer are not only parts, but essential parts of them—and they can never be separated. Some talk of their love to the Gospel, and their communion with God, who are hard-hearted and close-handed. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Others stand fair with their fellow-creatures, and are distinguished by liberality and kindness, yet they have no fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ; they live without God; they indulge their sensual passions, and imagine that charity covers a multitude of sins—"But pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world."

— A union of the *real* and *eminent* in religion: "He gave *much* alms to the people, and prayed to God *always*." There cannot be the eminence of

grace without the reality; but there may be the reality without the eminence. We should be thankful for a day of small things; but we should seek after a day of great ones. We should add to the essentials of religion, its excellencies too. We should not only have life, but have it more abundantly.

As to our temporal condition, we should be content with such things as we have; but contentment does not become us in divine things. There we should be ambitious. There we should be covetous. We need more. And more is attainable. Let us, therefore, enlarge our desires and our hopes, and seek to be filled with all the fulness of God.

JAN. 11.—"*Where dwellest thou?*" John i. 38.

THIS question was addressed to our Lord by two of John's disciples. One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother—of the other we are ignorant: but they were now both following Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, "What seek ye?" They said unto him, 'Rabbi, Where dwellest thou?'

Let us consider, the principle of the inquiry. It was not curiosity, but regard. It was as much as to say, we wish to be better acquainted. John had spoken of him highly, and they had just seen him: but this, instead of satisfying them, drew forth their desire after more intimacy. Now this is common to all the subjects of divine grace, and arises from *their love to him.* For love longs to be near the object of attachment: separation is painful; distance is intolerable; while intercourse yields a pleasure words can no more describe, than paint can express light or heat. Hence the believer longs to be with the Saviour. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,

where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside from the paths of thy companions?" The desire arises also from *the want of him*. What can I do, says the Christian, without him? he is my deliverer, my helper, my guide, my comforter. The earth can do better without the sun, than I can do without him, the sun of righteousness. The body does not depend so much upon the soul, as I do upon him, the quickening Spirit. Who can screen me from the condemnation of the Law? Who can relieve my burdened conscience? Whose grace is sufficient for me, to sanctify me in prosperity, to sustain me in adversity, to crown me in death? "Oh, cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." I must live in the same place, the same house, the same room, where thou dwellest—"Where dwellest thou?"

But let us find, if we can, an answer to this question. "He saith unto them, come and see;" and they went, and "saw where he dwelt." In a general way, he had not where to lay his head. It is not probable he had now a house to himself, but only an apartment hired or borrowed. But how was that lodging sanctified and honoured! They showed Alexander, when in Holland, a house where Peter the Great resided, and which is preserved in memory of him. Many have seen, at Olney, the alcove where Cowper wrote his "Task"—oh, to have seen a dwelling where Jesus resided! But where dwells he now? He *is* everywhere, but he is not said to *dwell* everywhere. Dwelling, with regard to Him, implies preference, and abiding with delight. First then, he dwells in heaven; and this marks the place, yea—this makes it. "Where I am, there shall my servants be." "Absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Secondly, He dwells in his Church. "This," says he, "is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Thirdly, He dwells in the sanctuary. "In all *places*

where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" And there his people have found him, and exclaimed, "Surely God is in this place." Fourthly, He dwells in the heart. He will reject every other residence you may offer him. "My son," says he, "give me thine heart;" and from every believer, he obtains what he demands—Christ dwells in his "heart by faith."

This may be called *enthusiasm* by some, but it is the language of Inspiration. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Let me forbear to injure and insult a Christian. Let me revere and honour him: he is a palace of the Prince of Peace; a temple of the Lord of all. Let me admire the condescension and kindness of Immanuel, God with us; and if I am the subject of this residence, let me not only rejoice in the dignity and privilege, but be concerned to discharge every duty I owe to such a distinguished guest, to such a divine inhabitant! "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

JAN. 12.—"*And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.*" Exod. xiii. 17, 18.

THERE were two ways which they might have taken to their destination. One was from the north of Egypt to the south of Canaan. This was short and

direct, and would have required but a few days, as we see in the case of Jacob's sons, when they fetched corn, and in the rapid incursion of Bonaparte. The other was very much farther and very indirect—and yet God took this; and instead of leading them to the Isthmus of Suez, he conducted them to the border of the Red Sea. He therefore declined the common road which the people would have chosen, and which every one else might have recommended, and selected the most unlikely.

For his thoughts are not our thoughts; neither are his ways our ways. And the promise is, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." It is well that we are under his guidance; for the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. We know not what is good for us; and, like children left to themselves, we should soon run into mischief. We are too ignorant, too selfish, too carnally minded, to choose for ourselves safely. How was it with the Jews in the time of Moses? They must have flesh—and he gave them their hearts' desire, but sent leanness into their souls. And was it not the same in the days of Samuel? They would have a king—and he gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath. And how has it been with ourselves? Have we not often been imposed upon both by our hopes and fears? Have we not anxiously desired what we now see would have proved injurious? And have we not been eager to escape what we now know has proved a blessing? If our bones have not been broken, have we not been bruised by the falls of our own rashness and folly? If we have not been thrown out of the vehicle, have we not endangered it enough to induce us to give back the reins into the proper hand? Surely we are not *yet* leaning to our own understanding; but com-

mitting our way unto the Lord. Surely we are *now* saying, The Lord shall choose our inheritance for us.

It is acknowledged that the course declined "was near." But God being the judge, the nearest way is not always the best. Jacob, in obtaining the blessing, went the nearest way to work, in imposing upon his blind father—but God's way would have been better, though it would have taken more time. Joseph's dreams might have been fulfilled by constraining his brethren to pay him immediate obeisance. But more than twenty years must previously elapse, and he must be sold into Egypt as a slave, and be imprisoned as a criminal, and be released as an interpreter, and possess all the store of the land as a deliverer. The thing was true; but the time appointed was long. Yet the Lord's time is the best: and the fruit we covet will be much more rich and wholesome when ripe, than if seized and devoured while green. He that believeth, therefore, maketh not haste. "This world is a Mesech, and my soul is vexed with the conversation of the wicked—Why is not my taste gratified? and why am I not allowed to enter the region of purity and peace?" Because your principles are to be tried and exemplified. Because you are to serve your generation by the will of God. "How long have I waited for an answer to prayer, for a deliverance from affliction, for a sense of divine favour?" And are ye not told that "it is good for a man not only to hope, but quietly wait for the salvation of God?" and that "blessed are all they that wait for him?" The order of nature is not to reap as soon as the seed is sown—weeks and months of varied weather, and some of it dreary and chilling, are introductory and preparatory to the harvest. It is the same with the order of grace—Be ye also patient.

God doth all things well: and if he led them the longest way, it was the right way. He did not choose it arbitrarily, but for reasons founded in his wisdom and kindness. Some of these reasons are not men-

tioned, but they were afterward developed; and the motive here assigned is well worthy of our attention—It was to keep them from "seeing war"—especially "with the Philistines;" into contact with whom they would have immediately come, the other way. At present they were not fitted for serious conflict. Their spirits had been broken by oppression, and they partook of the timidity as well as meanness of slaves. They were raw recruits, shepherds, brick-makers. It was better for them not to fight for awhile, or to have only a distant brush with Amalek, rather than be plunged at once into sanguinary contest with veteran foes, inured to battle, and rendered courageous by victory. How instructive is this! What is the counterpart of it? He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. A bruised reed will he not break, and the smoking flax will he not quench. He gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom. He affords to young converts some peculiar encouragements to allure them on, till they have advanced too far to think of going back, whatever they meet with. From a regard to their weakness and want of experience, for a time he hides, or restrains, many of their enemies, and thus secures them from encounters with which more aged Christians are familiar.

When will ministers and Christians learn to be followers of God? Under their guidance, persons who have but just left Egypt are often involved in controversies, even with Philistines. They have scarcely entered the grammar-school of repentance before they are sent to the university of predestination. Babes, instead of being fed with milk, have strong meat given them, and even bones. Their hope is shaken, and their comfort destroyed, because they have not the confidence and assurance required of them. But if we turn to the conduct of our Lord, we shall see that every thing is not to be advanced at once—every thing is not to be exacted of all—and in all circumstances. Hear *him*. "I have yet many things to say

unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. And he spake also a parable unto them: No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old: if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles, else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved."

JAN. 13.—"*The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.*" Rom. ii. 4.

REPENTANCE is indispensable to fallen creatures. And though it be from God, as well as all the blessings annexed to it, yet there is an order in his operations; and he must do some things for us, before he can do others. He must give grace before he can give glory; and before he makes us happy with himself, he must make us holy like himself. Hence we read of "repentance unto life."

But let us observe the manner of his producing this repentance. We are *led to it by his goodness*—not driven by the terrors of the Almighty. Cain, Pharaoh, Judas, were all terrified into repentance: and there was nothing in their experience ingenuous or saving. Peter was led to repentance. He had sadly sinned, and denied his Lord with cursings. But the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and

the look broke his heart; and "he went out, and wept bitterly." And says God, "Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done."

In the Gospel, he draws with the bands of a man and with the cords of love. And the repentance here spoken of, is the tender mother pulling her infant to her knee while chiding him, and constraining the little offender to hide his blushing face, and to sob out his heart into her bosom—not the stern father, driving the transgressor from his face into distance, and concealment, and dislike, and falsehood. Or if it be the father, it is the father of the Prodigal. Impatient of paternal restraint, he asked for his portion of goods, and went away into a very far country. Soon all he had was spent; and there arose a famine in the land, and he began to be in want; and he went and hired himself to keep swine—and oft he looked at his grovelling charge, and said, "O that I was one of you, and could eat and die and be no more." He even fed upon their vile fare; for no man gave unto him. At length he came to himself; and the thought of home struck him—"There is bread enough in my father's house, and I here perish with hunger. I will arise and go unto my father." While he was yet a great way off, hovering about and afraid to draw nigh, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. He had prepared a confession, acknowledging the vilest guilt; and a petition, imploring the meanest favour; but forgiving, overflowing love prevented the expression of either. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring forth the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

He felt his unworthiness before: but he was a thousand times more penitent now. "What a father

have I sinned against! What excellence have I contemned! What love have I abused!" How would he blush and weep, as he was not only clothed, but adorned; and not only fed, but feasted! How, as the ring touched his finger, and he was conducted into the room of mirth, prepared for *him!*—how, almost sinking under the weight of obligation—would he be ready to say—"How can I bear all this?" And would not the father be more endeared to him by forgiveness, than by birth? And after all this—would he be able to stab this father to the heart? To offend him? To grieve him? Must he not delight to obey him? and every moment ask, What wilt thou have me to do?

Despair hardens; but we are saved by hope. Threatenings may make us afraid to go on; but goodness makes us unwilling. Terrors may wrest the weapons of rebellion out of our hand; but goodness induces us to—hate them, and—throw them down—and weep over them—and return and vow, "O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy Name."

How mistaken then are many with regard to Christian repentance! It is not legal, but evangelical. It is not slavish, but filial. It is not degrading, but connected with the noblest feelings of the heart. It is not desponding and miserable, but lives in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. And "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

JAN. 14.—*And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.*" Gen. xl. 20.

If the chief butler had been falsely, and the chief baker had been justly accused, the providence of God was now seen in the clearing of the one, and the punishment of the other. If both were either equally innocent, or guilty; here was an instance of the arbitrariness of a prince who probably prided himself in his absolute authority, and in having it said, "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive." Or, perhaps, he designed to shew his subjects that he would be known both in the exercise of mercy and judgment. And hence, the *season* was his birthday.

The birthday of princes has been anciently and generally solemnized as a token of the respect due to their sovereignty: but it has often been abused, and given rise to wickedness and mischief. We see this in the case of Jeroboam. At the commemoration of his birth intemperance rioted; and the intoxication of the king himself injured his health, and made him forget his dignity in his joining familiarly with low buffoons and jesters: "In the day of our king, the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners." And how was it on a similar occasion with Herod? "Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates in Galilee"—the daughter of Herodias danced—the king was excited—and John was beheaded!

But, in almost every rank of life, the usage prevails, of persons observing with some degree of festivity the day of their birth. The thing is lawful in itself if it be used lawfully. It might be used profitably. But our pious forefathers made it, if a day of relative intercourse and congratulation, yet a day also of pious feeling and regard. And surely it should be made

— A day of thanksgiving to the Author and Giver of Life—For our being—for the rank we occupy in *the* scale of creation—for the country and family in

which we were brought forth—for our civil and religious advantages—and for our preservation through so many perils—and when so many have been cut off.

— A day of humiliation—That we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us—that we went astray from the womb—that our transgressions are innumerable, and our trespass is gone up into the very heavens—and that we have not improved, as we ought to have done, any of our privileges—"I do remember my faults this day."

— A day of reflection—That as there is a time to be born, so there is a time to die—that so much of life is already passed away as a shadow—that when a few years are come, we shall go the way whence we shall not return—that our continuance here is as uncertain as it is short—that we may never see this day again—and if we do not—where shall we be when it returns?

— A day of prayer—That we may so number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom—that we may obtain pardoning mercy and renewing grace—that we may be prepared for all the duties and trials that lie before us—that whether we live we may live unto the Lord, or whether we die we may die unto the Lord; so that, living and dying, we may be the Lord's.

Happy they who, without complaining of their lot, or being impatient to be gone, yet know that the day of their death is better than the day of their birth. Though for them to live is Christ, to die is gain: and every returning birthday tells them, "So much nearer your heavenly home."

But how dreadful the state of those who know, and if they consider, they must know—that every year advances them so much away from all they love; and brings them so much nearer a world in which, as they have no hope, so after which they can have no desire. If conscience be not stupified, and all thought banished by company and gaiety—a birthday to them is far

from enviable. Verses may be written; addresses may be received; smiles may be put on: but even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

What a difference in the two following references to the birth of the individuals:

"Who," says Voltaire, "can, without horror, consider the whole world as the empire of destruction? It abounds with wonders; it also abounds with victims. It is a vast field of carnage and contagion. Every species is without pity pursued and torn to pieces through the earth, and air, and water. In man there is more wretchedness than in all the other animals put together. He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoys a transient good, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This knowledge is his fatal prerogative: other animals have it not. He spends the transient moments of his existence in diffusing the miseries which he suffers: in cutting the throats of his fellow-creatures for pay; in cheating and being cheated; in robbing and being robbed; in serving, that he might command; and in repenting of all he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate; and the globe contains rather carcasses than men. I tremble at the review of this dreadful picture to find that it contains a complaint against Providence itself; and I WISH I HAD NEVER BEEN BORN."

Now let us hear the language of the excellent Hallyburton, who died as he lived, full of confidence in God. "I shall shortly get a very different sight of God from what I have ever had, and shall be made meet to praise him for ever and ever. O the thoughts of an incarnate Deity are sweet and ravishing. O how I wonder at myself that I do not love him more, and that I do not admire him more. What a wonder that I enjoy such composure under all my bodily pains, and in the view of death itself. What

mercy that having the use of my reason, I can declare his goodness to my soul. I long for his salvation; I bless his name I have found him, and lie rejoicing in him. O blessed be God that I WAS BORN! O that I was where he is. I have a father and mother, and ten brothers and sisters, in heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. O there is a telling in this Providence, and I shall be telling it for ever! If there be such a *glory* in his conduct towards me now, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne? Blessed be God that—ever I WAS BORN."

JAN. 15.—"*Unto thee, O God, do I lift up my soul.*" Ps. xxv. 1.

IT is not easy to do this. We are naturally sluggish and grovelling. Who has not reason to acknowledge with shame and sorrow, "my soul cleaveth unto the dust?" It is easy enough, in duty, to lift up our hands, and our eyes, and our voices; but it is another thing to come even to his seat, to enter into the secret of his tabernacle, and to hold intercourse with the God of heaven. And yet, without this, what is devotion? And how unanswerable will all our services be to the requisition of Him who is a Spirit, and seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth?

And without this, a real Christian is no more satisfied than God. He will not, indeed, from a principle of duty, undervalue the means of grace, and neglect private and public devotion; but he is disappointed unless he can lift up his soul unto God. And this marks the spiritual worshipper. He is not distinguished by always enjoying liberty and fervour in his holy exercises; but he mourns the want of them—while the formalist looks no further than the per-

formance itself, and returns from the House Throne of God without ever enquiring wheth has had communion with Him.

It is the spirituality of religion that befr enjoyment. Nothing yields us pleasure but ir portion as the heart is engaged in the pursuit. dull, how tiresome are those tasks, in which

> "In vain to heaven we lift our cries,
> "And leave our souls behind."

But it is good to draw *near* to God. Then is a sacred charm that keeps our thoughts from dering. Then we attend on the Lord wi distraction. Then we feel no weariness of s We call the Sabbath a delight. We find his w and eat them. And our meditation of Him is sw

And when such a worshipper comes fort will be ready to say to all he meets, "That v we have seen and heard declare we unto you; ye may have fellowship with us, and truly our fe ship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Ch And *His* recommendations are likely to have effect. For his profit will appear unto all men. face shines. His heart speaks. His life sp His character speaks. He *must* be impressive influential. He *will* be felt—in the family—ir Church—and in the world. He cannot but do g even without pretension—without effort.

> "When such a man, familiar with the skies,
> "Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise;
> "And once more mingles with us, meaner things;
> "'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings—
> "Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> "Which tells, whence his treasures are supplied."

JAN. 16.—"*I know the thoughts I think tou you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace, and n evil, to give you an expected end.*" Jer. xxix

WHAT can the people of God desire more? They are here assured by Himself—that he *thinks* of them—that he *knows* his thoughts towards them—that they are *kind* in their nature: thoughts of *peace*, and not of *evil*—and that they regard an *end* allowing and requiring *expectation*: to bring them to an *expected end*.

He designed and procured the Jews good in Babylon: but the ransomed of the Lord were to return, and come to Zion. "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." Here we see what was *their* expected end. And what did it prefigure, but "The end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls"—"The end, everlasting life?" The Christian is now on the sea encountering many a wind, and feeling many a fear: but the voyage will end; and he will be brought into the desired haven. He is now on a journey; and he is often discouraged because of the way; but it will end in a better country, and at his Father's house, where are many mansions. He is now in a warfare; and though it be a good one, it is trying and painful: but the strife will soon end; and the head exchange the helmet for "the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

But what characterizes the posture of the believer's mind with regard to this? Expectation. He is looking for that blessed hope. He is waiting for the Saviour from Heaven. For he is now saved by hope. Every thing now leads him forward. Creatures; ordinances; his connexions; his experience; every thing in his painful and in his pleasing feelings; all, all says, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest." Human expectation is seldom justified by the event. If the votary do not miss his aim, he is disappointed in his object, and his heart sighs in the midst of his success. But let the Christian's expectation be as great as even the Scripture can make

it, the blessedness itself will be much greater; and the fruition will induce the acknowledgment, "The half was not told me." Yet the expectation is very distinguishable from the confidence of the presumptuous. Natural men find it a very easy thing to hope, because they hope without any proper sense of their unworthiness and guilt; they hope without examination, without evidence; uninformed and unauthorized. It is one of the first works of the Spirit of God to break up this state of mind; and then the man can say, with Paul, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Yet while he for ever shuts this door of hope, he opens another: he turns him from the Law to the Gospel; from self to the Saviour; from going about to establish his own righteousness, to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God. Hence arises what the Apostle calls "*a good hope through grace;*" and the goodness consists not so much in the strength of the confidence, as in the solidity of the foundation, and the clearness and fulness of the warrant. Our Lord speaks of two builders; the one he calls a fool, the other a wise man. But the differences between them was not so much in the edifices themselves, as in the groundwork. Both structures looked fair enough to the passenger, but the house of the former was built upon the sand, and the storm carried it away; while that of the latter stood every assault, for it was founded on a rock. What a sandy base has the hope of many! How certainly and easily will be overthrown—the expectation of the sinner, the worldling, the hypocrite, and the Pharisee! But the Christian's hope maketh not ashamed: it rests on the foundation laid in Zion; and the possessor cannot be confounded, unless God can become a liar, and be chargeable with perjury—for he has not only promised, but swore: and "because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself."

Keep much alive this expectation. Let nothing shake its confidence. Let nothing obscure the object, or the ground of it. It can do wonders; and will produce a thousand advantages in proportion as it is realized.

I repair to the believer who is fully exemplifying it; and I find him dead to the world, and "all that earth calls good and great." And what is the cause? "An expected end." He has looked within the veil, and seen the glory that excelleth. The sun has rendered invisible the glow-worms—and the stars too.

I find him satisfied with an inferior condition in life, and though denied many indulgences with which the children of this generation abound. And what is the reason? "An expected end." They are at home, says he, but I am not.

"Their hope and portion lies below,
"'Tis all the happiness they know."

But I am a stranger and a pilgrim. I am at an inn; it yields me but few entertainments, or even accommodations—so much the better. It might otherwise tempt and detain me; but now it urges me on.

And what makes him so cheerful in his trials? "An expected end."

"A hope so much divine,
"May trials well endure."

And this hope, says he, I have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast: and "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." This expected end, also, says he, animates me in all the difficulties attending a course of obedience. If hope actuates to such exertions, hardships, and sacrifices, the sons of learning, fame, and wealth; should *I* ever be cold, or discouraged, with the certainty before me of an eternity, an infinity of all good? —This too, says he, composes me in the prospect, and reconciles me to the approach of death. In itself

it is far from pleasant, but it is the right way to a city of habitation: a departure to be with Christ, which is far better. He also can make the exit as gentle, as the issue is glorious. However this may be,

"'Tis there for ever I shall dwell,
"With Jesus in the realms of day;
"Then I shall bid these fears farewell,
"And He will wipe my tears away.

"Jesus, on thee our hopes depend,
"To lead us on to thine abode;
"Assured our home will make amends
"For all our toil upon the road."

JAN. 17.—"*The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.*" Gal. iii. 24.

WHAT law? Three kinds of law were given to the Jews. It is not necessary to exclude either, though the last is principally intended.

The *judicial.* This regarded their policy as a nation; regulated their conduct towards each other; and determined their civil crimes and penalties—Even this led to Christ; especially the right of redemption, which lay with the nearest of kin. So did also the provision of the cities of refuge—and happy, happy they who have fled for relief to him that was prefigured by them.

The *ceremonial.* This prescribed their worship, and enjoined a multitude of services and sacrifices which were all shadows of good things to come, but the body was Christ. It would be endless to particularize. The tabernacle, the mercy-seat, the altar, the table of shew-bread, the paschal lamb—all these led to him, and derived their importance from the relation. And hence those who deny their typical use have always spoken depreciatingly of them. The Jews were in the infancy of the Church; and these ceremonies were like pictures placed over the child's

lessons: or the whole economy may be considered as a star to the travellers in search of the Consolation of Israel, going before them till it stood over where the young child was—and then disappearing.

The *moral*. This was of universal and perpetual obligation; being founded not on any positive appointment or authority; but in the nature of man; and the relations subsisting between him and God, and between him and his fellow-creatures. The substance of it is, to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. Is this unreasonable? Can God himself dispense with it? Can he require less?

Now this leads us to Christ, first, by convincing us of sin: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It is owing to men's ignorance of this law that they think so well of themselves. Did they know that it ranks all omissions of duty in the number of sins; that it extends to the state of the heart, as well as of the life; and to our motives and principles as well as our actions; self-abased and despairing, they would cry out, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Secondly, by shewing us our danger. This results from transgression: for the curse enters with all sin—"cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." If you were in a room where there was a dead lion; you need not be afraid. But if while you were walking by, he should come to life, and rise upon his feet, and glare his eyeballs, and begin to roar;—as he revived, you would die with fear.—So it was with Paul—"I was alive," says he, "without the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Thirdly, by gendering despair of life by it. Here again the Apostle tells us, that his death *to* the law was also *by* it. "I *through* the law am dead unto the law, that I might live unto God." Thus the extremity of the danger makes us call out for a deliverer. Famine lectured back the Prodigal to his father's

house; and disease drives the patient to apply to a physician, which he would otherwise neglect, and submit to a remedy which he would otherwise reject.—"The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."

The law, therefore, is good if it be used lawfully, and ministers ought to preach it.—Some pass under a greater law work than others; but let none question the genuineness of the relief they have obtained, because they have not experienced much terror and distress. This terror and distress are but in the order of means; and the design of them is answered if we are brought to Christ, and acquiesce in *his* salvation.

— Every one, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto him, and can find encouragement no where else.—And him that cometh unto me, says the Saviour, I will in no wise cast out.

JAN. 18.—"*I had not thought to see thy face; and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.*"

Gen. xlviii. 11.

THIS was the language of the dying Jacob, when Joseph presented to him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

We behold in it his *piety*. He owns God in his indulgences—*He* has shewn me. Our comforts are sanctified and rendered doubly sweet when we receive them all from *his* hand. Let others live without God with them in the world; I would acknowledge him in all my ways. Let them ascribe their successes and enjoyments to chance, or to the power of their friends, or to their own diligence and skill; I would give him the glory that is due only to *his* Name; and remember that whatever be the medium of my comfort, he is the source; that whatever be the instrument, he is the

author—"The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

Observe, also, his *surprize*: his expectation was more than exceeded. We remember the sad relation of his loss of Joseph, and the garment dipped in blood, by which his grief was deluded, though not relieved. "And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." For many years he never dreamed of his survival: but added, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and will ye take Benjamin away? All these things are against me." In process of time, however, all this gloomy conclusion was contradicted: "And they told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." By and by this was fulfilled, "and Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

Something, however, was still wanting. Joseph had sons; and these would be peculiarly endeared to Jacob. At length he embraces *them*, as well as the father—"I had not thought to see thy face; and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy *seed*."

Is this the only instance in which God has not

only frustrated the fears, but surpassed the hopes of his people? When Moses was in the ark of bulrushes, all his parents could have hoped for would have been his preservation, or falling into the hands of some kind individual, who, affected with his infancy and suffering, would have taken care of him—though they should never have seen him more. But Pharaoh's daughter finds him; and adopts him; and his mother becomes his nurse; and he is educated in all the learning of Egypt; and he appears the deliverer and leader of Israel! David said, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul: but after a number of hairbreadth escapes, he was saved from *all* his enemies, and sat down upon the throne, "a wonder unto many."

How many are there in whose experience this remark has been exemplified, as to temporal things! They once had no inheritance, no not so much as to set their foot on: and all they hoped to gain by their humble efforts, was only bread to eat and raiment to put on: and lo! he has given them not only subsistence, but competency and affluence. And as to spiritual things—the penitent remembers how, when awakened out of his sleep, and he gazed on the horrors of his state, there seemed nothing left but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation. How hard did he find it to hope even for deliverance! But the Lord appeared, to his joy; and not only spared and pardoned him, but enriched and ennobled him: and took him not only into his service, but into his house and into his bosom.

But in nothing has this observation been more frequently verified than in the dying experience of believers. They had all their life-time been subject to bondage through fear of death; a thousand comforts had been embittered by the apprehension—but this did not affect their safety then; and when their departure was at hand, they were filled with peace and joy; and had an abundant entrance ministered unto them into the Saviour's everlasting king-

dom. Some who had trembled at the shaking of a leaf before, have then displayed a courage amounting to more than heroism; and those who had shrunk back from speaking, especially concerning themselves, have shouted aloud upon their beds, and sung of His righteousness. "Ah!" says Dr. Goodwin, "Is this dying? How have I dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend!" To die is gain.

When the Queen of Sheba, though accustomed to royal magnificence, witnessed the glory of Solomon, she exclaimed, The half was not told me. So the believer, after all the reports of the Scripture; all the earnests and foretastes of heaven; finds it to be a glory yet to be revealed: and when he arrives at the possession, he will acknowledge that eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him.

Let all this scatter our doubts, and lead us to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." Especially let us view, through the force of this truth, all our future duties and difficulties. We are not to limit the Holy One of Israel. What is impossible to us, is easy to him. His thoughts and ways are as far above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth; and he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. We have read of an Emperor, who said, he delighted to undertake enterprizes deemed by his counsellors and captains impracticable: and he seldom failed in them. God cannot fail. But he loves to surprise. He, therefore, turneth the shadow of death into the morning. At eventide, says He, it shall be light.

JAN. 19.—"*And Noah walked with God.*" Gen. vi. 9.

THE Apostle gives us a fine representation of religion, when, speaking of God, he says, "With whom

we have to do." We have to do with our fellow-creatures in various relations; but morality must be supported by piety, and flow from it. It is with God we have principally to do. Our connections with him, our expectations from him, our obligations to him, are infinitely supreme.

Three expressions are observable as to our walking with regard to God. First, we read of "walking *after* the Lord." This supposes him to be our leader and example; and requires us to be followers of him as dear children. "They shall walk after the Lord," says Hosea.—Secondly, we read of walking *before* God. This supposes him to be our observer and witness—we are thus always in his sight. "Walk before me," said God to Abraham. "I will walk before the Lord," says David, "in the land of the living." We also read of "walking *with* God." So did Noah; so did Enoch; so does every partaker of divine grace. But this seems to hold him forth as our companion and friend. This is surprising; but so it is. There is an intercourse between us—we have fellowship one with another. In order to this, reconciliation is necessary: for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" And this reconciliation must be mutual. It is not enough that God is reconciled to us through the blood of the Cross—we must be also reconciled to God, and love his presence, and choose his way.

For walking *with* God implies a oneness of course; and supposes that we advance together towards the same end. God's aim is his own glory: and we are enjoined, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God." As far as we observe this rule, we walk with God; as far as we neglect it, we leave God, and go in another direction.

If we are familiar and conversant with any one, we unavoidably catch something of his spirit and his manners—Hence it is said, "He that walketh *with* wise men shall be wise; but a companion of

fools shall be destroyed." If I walk with God, I shall resemble him; and all will take knowledge of me that I have been with Jesus.

How envied would the man be that was allowed to walk with the king—But I walk with the King of kings, and the Lord of lords—"Such honour have all the saints." What security have I in nearness to Him!—"He is at my right hand: I shall not be moved." What can I want if I have Him?—"My presence shall go with thee; and I will give thee rest."

"Were I in heaven without my God,
"'Twould be no joy to me;
"And while this earth is my abode,
"I long for none but Thee."

JAN. 20.—"*And praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.*" Luke iii. 22.

WE may consider this descent three ways: as an answer to prayer; as a miraculous testimony; and as a significant emblem.

— He had just been baptized; and was now going to enter on his public office; and we are told he prayed. Whether he prayed vocally or only mentally, we know not: but he prayed really. And if prayer was necessary for Him, can it be needless for us? And he prayed exemplarily; and has taught us to pray after we have been engaged in any ordinance, and before we enter on any undertaking. He also prayed successfully. Indeed the Father heard him always, because he always prayed according to the will of God. But how prompt was the answer! It reached him in the very act of devotion: "And *praying*, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a *bodily* shape like a dove upon him." It was the

same in the Transfiguration: "*As* he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering." The prayer of faith is always immediately heard, and if it be not always immediately answered, it is not from a want of disposition in God to bless us, but because he is a God of judgment, and waits to be gracious. But if we consult the Scripture; and appeal to our own experience; and especially observe, not only the benefit we have derived *from* prayer, but *in* it; we shall know that he is a God at hand and not afar off: and verify the truth of his own word: "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

It is to be viewed also as a miracle; and so it was an authentication of his divine mission. Hence the voice that accompanied it—"Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased." Hence John was previously informed of this confirmation. For though his relation, yet (to preclude all collusion and management) John had not seen Jesus before this event: but was taught, when they met, to recognize him by it: "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." John, therefore, could not but be instantly and perfectly convinced: "And I saw," says he, "and bare record, that this is the Son of God." Nothing, therefore, could have been more unsuspicious and decisive—The sign was foretold—its brilliancy, form, and descent were obvious to sense—it remained on him for a considerable time—and all was in the presence of a multitude of spectators! How different are the miracles of the Gospel from the prodigies of Heathenism and the lying wonders of the Church of Rome.

But in whatever visible form the Holy Ghost d alighted upon the Saviour's head, the miracle ould have been the same. But the symbol would ot have been the same. His descending in "a odily shape *like a dove*," was intended to be an nblem. First, an emblem of the dispensation he ad to announce. The Law is called a fiery law; nd it worketh wrath to every transgressor. The ature of it was intimated even in the very manner f its promulgation. The mount shook, and burned ith fire. There were blackness, and darkness, and empest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice f words. The people could not endure that which as commanded. And so terrible was the sight, hat Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. But race and Truth came by Jesus Christ. And how? he moment he is inaugurated, and is stepping orth to preach the Kingdom of Heaven, the heaven pens—not for the thunder to roll and the lightnings o flash, but for the Holy Ghost to descend in a odily shape like a dove upon Him!

Did the dove return into the ark with an olive ranch, thereby announcing that the flood had subided? And has he, with a leaf in his mouth, ever ince been viewed as the image of a Messenger of eace? Who came and attested deliverance from he wrath to come? Who came and preached peace o them that were afar off and to them that were igh? What says the Church? "Rise up, my love, ny fair one, and come away: for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." But who was the harbinger of another spring; of a nobler renovation?—Who cries, "Come, for all things are now ready?"

Secondly, an emblem of his personal character. All the love, tenderness, gentleness, mildness, for which the dove seems always to have been con-

sidered as a kind of representative, were to be found in him. So the prophecies going before had described him. And if we observe his miracles, if we enter into his life, his whole life on earth, we shall see him going about doing good. How kind to friends! How merciful to the distressed! How gracious to the guilty! How ready to forgive! How patient under provocation! He was compassion alive and embodied.

Thirdly, an emblem of the temper of his disciples. For there must be a conformity between him and them. In all things he has the pre-eminence; but if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. He that is joined to the Lord is of one spirit—and how did the Holy Ghost descend upon him? As a *dove.*

Estimate, therefore, your religion by your resemblance to this image. Do not judge of your having the Spirit, by opinions, but principles; by impressions, but dispositions; by gifts, but grace.—Some fear they are strangers to the Spirit because they have not received it in a particular way: that is, after great terror and anguish of soul. This is, indeed, sometimes the case; but it is not always so. In this manner the Jailer's religion commenced: but it was not thus with Cornelius, nor Lydia.

Whatever distress or horror of conviction we have felt, they are nothing if they have not brought us to Christ: and if we *have* been brought, let us be thankful and rejoice, "if by any means." The best thing is to judge, not by the manner of the operation, but the influence itself, and its effects: or by the fruit of the Spirit—And "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law." "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

JAN. 21.—"*And the Lord said unto Moses, get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.*" Num. xxvii. 12, 13.

REFLECTIONS on death can never be unseasonable while we are in a dying world, and a dying church; and are conscious that we ourselves are dying creatures. It is said God sees no iniquity in his people. But he has threatened to visit their transgressions with a rod. Some tell us that sin never hurts a believer. But it hurt David. It hurt Eli. Moses was also severely chastised. He was very dear to God, and could plead great provocation; but because he rebelled against his commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, he was excluded the land of Canaan; and though he was very importunate, he could not obtain a repeal of the trying sentence. Yet in judgment God remembers mercy. He here orders him to die; but the order is attended with three softenings to reconcile him to it.

First. He must die—but he shall previously go up, and "see the land which the Lord has given to the children of Israel." Some might suppose that this would tantalize him, and add to his affliction at the loss: but it was designed as an alleviation; and it was accepted by Moses as a favour. For this purpose, his natural sight continued uninjured; and his extent of vision was perhaps also enlarged. Thus not only was his curiosity gratified, but he saw, with gladness and praise, the goodness and truth of God's promise to his people: while in type, he hailed the prospect of a better country, even a heavenly; and which he was going to enter. Oh! say many, apprehensive now of the solemn event,

"Oh! could we make our doubts remove,
"These gloomy doubts that rise,
"And view the Canaan that we love,
"With unbeclouded eyes!

"Could *we* but climb where *Moses* stood,
"And view the landscape o'er;
"Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
"Should fright us from the shore."

And they are generally indulged. And often those have been peculiarly favoured, who all their life-time have been subject to bondage through fear of death.

Secondly. He must die—but this will be "a gathering unto his people." To Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and the Israel of God. These he so prized on earth, that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Some had departed that he had known: and numbers that he had not known:—but he was to join them—not in the same grave; for he was buried alone, and no one knows of his sepulchre unto this day; but in heaven—not as to his body, but as to his soul, which was to be united with the spirits of just men made perfect. The believer expects a family meeting. There, says he,—

"There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
"There God my Saviour reigns."

Thirdly. He must die—but "only as Aaron his brother was gathered." And are we better than those who have gone before us? And is there any reason why we should be exempted from their lot? The previous removal of the pious, especially those of our own relations, tends to render death more familiar. It comes near enough for us to view it. It enters our very apartments. It also tends to diminish our forebodings and despondency. We have seen that God was better to them than their fears. He was with them in the valley.

Their end was peace. They were supported; they were comforted—and we thank God, and take courage. Why should it not be so with us? It also weakens our attachment to life. We have fewer attractions below, and so many more above. Who has not felt the sentiment, "Let us also go away, that we may die with him?"

Surely the bitterness of death is past.

"I could renounce my all below,
"If my Creator bid;
"And run, if I were called to go,
"An die as Moses did."

JAN. 22.—"*And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" Luke xxiv. 32.

THAT is—we have *now* discovered him. How is it that we did not discover him earlier? and find him out upon the road? Why did we not distinguish him by his very speaking—the manner of it—the effect of it—in touching and animating the heart?

Ah! my soul, it is thus his teaching is to be known—it is always FELT. And while other teachers reach only the ear, he penetrates the heart; and causes it to burn with ingenuous shame, with abhorrence of sin, with holy revenge, with love to his Name, with zeal for his glory, and earnestness to save sinners.

He *now* converses with us by the way, and he opens to us the Scriptures; and he does it in three ways.

First, by his dispensations. As the word explains Providence, so Providence illustrates the word. How many passages are there in the Bible, the beauty of which we should never have seen, the sweetness of

which we should never have tasted, the force of which we should never have felt, had it not been for certain events, and those chiefly of an afflictive kind. These drive us to the Book, never so valued as in the day of trouble, and enable us to read with other eyes and in other light than before.

Secondly, by the labours of his servants. He replenishes his ministers, that they may dispense to others; he gives them the tongue of the learned, that they should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. It was in the temple David wished to enquire: it was, when he went into the sanctuary of God, that he seized a clue which enabled him to unravel a mystery which had so confounded and distressed him before. And while hearing the word preached, have not our doubts been often solved, our fears dispelled, our faith and hope strengthened? That which was general before, has been particularized: that which was distant, has been brought home to our apprehensions: that which was read without impression or notice, has become significant and interesting. How often has the Angel of the Church, like Hagar's angel, opened our eyes, and shewn us the well!

Thirdly, by the agency of his Holy Spirit. "He shall lead you unto all truth." Means do not render his influence needless—revelation itself does not. David had the word of God, but he kneeled and prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The dial tells us the time, but the sun must shine upon it. The compass enables the mariner to steer, but not if it be placed in the dark. "In thy light we shall see light." Here is the promise, at once to direct and encourage.—"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." What is the reason why many, in the greatness of their folly, for ever go astray? They do not trust

in the Lord with all their heart, but lean to their own understandings—while the wayfaring man, though a fool, errs not therein, because, made sensible of his ignorance and insufficiency, he in all his ways acknowledges God, and God himself directs his paths; and is his Guide even unto death.

JAN. 23.—"*Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" Luke xi. 9.

IT is needless to prove, that by this action our Saviour intends prayer. But see the simplicity and familiarity of *his* comparisons; and wonder not that the common people heard him gladly. Volumes have been written upon the subject of prayer: but he who spake as never man spake, comprises every thing in one word—*knock*. The allusion is to a person who wishes to excite attention, in order to obtain relief—he knocks.

Where are we to knock? "I am," says the Saviour, "the door." "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

When are we to knock? "Morning, and evening, and noon," says David, "will I pray, and cry aloud." "Pray without ceasing," says Paul. And says our Lord, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

For *what* are we to knock? We may in every thing, by prayer and supplication, make known our requests unto God. But we are supremely to implore all spiritual blessings, because these are blessings for the soul and eternity. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

How are we to knock? *Importunately*—we cannot knock too loud. Prayer is nothing, unless it be sincere and earnest. God will not regard the address we ourselves do not feel. Jacob said, "I will

not let thee go, except thou bless me:" and he prevailed.—How? *Perseveringly*. The Lord does not always immediately appear to our joy. "I waited patiently for the Lord," says David, "and at last he inclined his ear unto me and heard my cry." And, "blessed," it is said, "are all they that wait for Him." But though it be a good thing for a man not only to hope, but quietly wait for the salvation of God; it is often no easy thing. The delay is trying in itself; but circumstances may render it more so. While standing at the door, the weather may be foul; or those passing by may laugh and insult—for they are full, and have need of nothing: or the applicant may be weak, and ready to faint. And what, while thus exercised, can *keep* him knocking and waiting? Nothing, but a sense of his wants. They are so pressing, that he *must* succeed, or perish. Nothing, but hope. This hope may be sometimes very weak. But a degree of it, if it only amounts to a mere possibility, is necessary to preserve him from abondoning his suit, and saying, "What, should I wait for the Lord any longer?" More, however, is desirable and attainable: and here is enough to say to him, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Here is the *command*—"Knock." Here is the *promise*—"It shall be opened."

But how shall I plead? I knock, and long for audience—and yet I draw back, and seem afraid to be seen. For, what can I say? What does the BEGGAR say? He is not at a loss. He knows a fine address is not necessary—it would be contemned. Yet he can express his meaning: and his wants and feelings make him eloquent. Begin, then, and say—

"Encourag'd by thy word
"Of promise to the poor,
"Behold, a beggar, Lord,
Waits at thy mercy's door!

"No hand, no heart, O Lord, but thine,
"Can help or pity wants like mine.

Yet add—

"The beggar's usual plea,
"Relief from men to gain,
"I know thou wouldst disdain;
"And pleas which move thy gracious ear,
"Are such as men would scorn to hear."

There are five of these pleas urged by others, which *you* must completely reverse.

How often does the beggar plead his former condition—"He has seen better days: and once had a sufficiency for himself and others." But *this* must be your language—

"I have no right to say,
"That though I now am poor,
"Yet once there was a day
"When I possessed more:
"Thou know'st that from my very birth
"I've been the poorest wretch on earth."

How often does the beggar plead his innocency or goodness—"I have been reduced, not by my fault, but my misfortune; and deserve pity rather than censure." But *your* language must be—

"Nor can I dare profess,
"As beggars often do,
"Though great is my distress,
"My faults have been but few;
"If thou shouldst leave my soul to starve,
"It would be what I well deserve."

How often does the beggar plead the unusualness of his application—"This is not my practice: it is the first, and shall be the last time of my importuning you." But *your* language must be—

"'Twere folly to pretend
"I never begg'd before;
"Or if thou now befriend,
"I'll trouble thee no more;

"Thou often hast reliev'd my pain,
"And often I must come again."

How often does the beggar plead the smallness of the boon—"A very little will suffice me: I ask only a trifle." But *your* language must be—

"Though crumbs are much too good
"For such a dog as I,
"No less than children's food
"My soul can satisfy.
"O do not frown and bid me go,
"I must have all thou canst bestow."

Men, so limited are their resources, are afraid of more applications than they can relieve: and, therefore, enjoin the suppliant secrecy; and he promises concealment. But *your* language must be—

"Nor can I willing be
"Thy bounty to conceal
"From others who, like me,
"Their wants and hunger feel:
"I'll tell them of thy mercy's store,
"And try to send a thousand more."

And he will be delighted with this. He commands you to spread his goodness, and to invite all the ends of the earth!!

"Thy thoughts, thou only wise!
"Our thoughts and ways transcend,
"Far as the arched skies
"Above the earth extend:
"Such pleas as mine men would not hear,
"But God receives a beggar's prayer."

JAN. 24.—"*Thy blessing is upon thy people.*" Ps. iii. 8.

—HE has a people: and we need not ascend into heaven and examine the decrees of God to know

who they are. The Bible is our book of life; there the heirs of glory are written, if not by name, yet by character; and "we are the circumcision," says the Apostle, "who worship God in the Spirit—and rejoice in Christ Jesus—and have no confidence in the flesh."

By the Scripture, therefore, let us judge ourselves; and be anxious to ascertain whether *we* are in the number of his people—for they are the most important and enviable people upon earth. They are not commonly distinguished by any worldly greatness; and they have many enemies who consult their injury—But the blessing of God is upon them.

— Upon their *mercies.* This takes the curse out of them, and gives them a relish never tasted in the comforts of others. "I will bless thy bread and thy water."

— Upon their *trials.* And they as much need a blessing upon their daily rod, as upon their daily bread. Without this, our afflictions will do us no good, yea, they will prove injurious; and leave us more careless and impeninent: but by means of this, they will turn to our salvation; and yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised therewith.

— Upon their *labours.* "Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." Without this, in vain we rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows: it is he that giveth his beloved sleep. It matters not what we sow, if he does not give the increase; or what we bring home, if he blows upon it; or what we gain, if we "put it into a bag with holes." "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it."

— Upon their *families.* The house of Obed Edom was blessed for the sake of the ark; and the thing was publicly known. "I have been young," says David, "and now am old, yet I have never seen

the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

— Upon their *souls*. Thus they are blessed with light, and liberty, and strength, and peace, and joy: yea, they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

O Christian, is this thy experience and portion? Rejoice and be grateful. What can equal the blessing of God!

But remember how it comes upon you. The source is his free and boundless grace. The medium is the Lord Jesus. He is the way from God to us, as well as from us to God.

Remember how it is insured—by the truth of His promise and His oath. You may remind Him of this, and plead as Jacob did, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good."

Remember also how it is to be enjoyed—in the use of means, and in obedience to his will. "Blessed are they that do judgment, and keep his commandments at all times."

O my soul, put in for a share. Pray, "Bless me, even me, also, O my Father." He will not, cannot refuse—"Their hearts shall live that seek God."

JAN. 25.—"*And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.*" Gen. xlviii. 1, 2.

AFTER a very cloudy day, Jacob has a clear and calm evening: and it is but an evening. He is now called to go the way of all the earth: but his end is peace. Some die suddenly. But the more com-

mon road to the house appointed for all living, is down the narrow, miry, dark, and dismal lane of sickness. The former is a privilege to the individual himself, saving him from "the pains, the groans, the dying strife:" but the latter befriends more his usefulness, by affording him opportunities to exercise the graces of the Holy Spirit, and showing how religion can sustain when every other supply fails, and refresh when every other spring of comfort is dried up. But we are not to choose for ourselves: and if we can hope that the Saviour will receive us to himself, we may well leave—the when—the where—and the how, to his wise and kind care.

When sickness seizes persons in early life, and removes them in the midst of their days and usefulness, we seem surprised. Yet wherefore? Are not all our days vanity? And if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, is not their strength labour and sorrow? What, then, can we expect at one hundred and forty-seven?

Jacob had some time before kept his bed, and Joseph had visited him; but seeing no immediate danger of death, he had returned. Now the case assumes a more threatening character, and he is re-called. Doubtless, they had sent to another Being, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." But they do well to inform Joseph; and Joseph immediately leaves his public affairs, and hastens to visit him. To visit the sick is a duty. If it affords the sufferer no effectual relief, it is soothing to show our regard, our sympathy, and our readiness to help. It is always profitable to ourselves; and far better than going to the house of mirth. For here the heart is made better; more serious, and more soft. Hence the dying bed is shunned by infidel and worldly companions, who love not to be reminded how soon the condition of others may be their own.

How affecting is it to visit a fellow-creature, the progress of whose disorder is saying to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister. But O! to see a dear friend, a beloved relation, a revered parent, sinking under the decays of nature and the violence of disease! It is a sick dying *father*, who had trained him up under an affection too partial, that Joseph visits. Though death does not follow the order of nature, but the appointment of God; yet, while parents are living, there seems to be something between us and death; but when they are removed, his course seems open to us; and we naturally deem ourselves the next objects of assault.

Joseph goes not alone, but takes his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. It was wise and well in Joseph to take these youths away from the splendour of a court to see the end of all men; to view a dying bed dignified with more than a palace could bestow; to show them, at their entering the world, a servant of God departing out of it; to enable them to receive his admonition and blessing: and to be reminded, that though born in Egypt, Egypt was not to be their home; but while incorporated with strangers, they were to seek the heritage of Jacob, God's chosen.

How much wiser and better was this, than the conduct of many parents, who, instead of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, conduct their children into scenes of gaiety and dissipation, exciting and feeding the pride of life, and making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. We mourn over children that are bereaved of their parents: yet one is sometimes tempted to wish the removal of some wretched fathers and mothers—hoping, that if these examples and teachers of evil were withdrawn, their children would find it good to bear the yoke in their youth, and that the Lord may take them up. The worst orphans

are those who have wicked parents alive! What a dreadful meeting will there be hereafter between their offspring, and those fathers and mothers who not only neglected their souls, but taught and encouraged them to go astray!

— Not that we would have children confined to religious prisons, or even cells. Hinder them not from seeing and enjoying whatever is pleasing and instructive in the world of nature, and the wonders of art. Keep them not in a frozen region, that shall chill and check every harmless budding of mind and affection. Let your piety itself be inviting, not rebuking and repulsive. But, O ye parents, keep them from infidel books; from vicious associates; from every path of the Destroyer. Allure them to the Bible, to the Throne of Grace, to the grave of friendship, to the chamber where a dying Jacob is waiting for God's salvation—to every place where they are likely to meet Him, who says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

JAN. 26.—"*He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*" 2 Cor. v. 5.

THIS self-same thing is nothing less than the final blessedness of the righteous; which, though it doth not yet fully appear, is expressed in the Scripture by various names and images. It is called in the preceding verses, "A building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and also "life"—"Mortality shall be swallowed up of *life*."

With regard to this, the Apostle reminds us of God's work, in our preparation for the whole; and of God's gift, in our possession of a part.

The preparation is not natural to us. We are not born Christians, but made such: and the operation

is no less than divine. Creatures have not done it; nor have we done it ourselves. It is above the power of education, example, and moral suasion—*He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* But the work is as necessary as it is divine. In vain should we have a title to glory, without a meetness for it. Every office, every state, requires a qualification for it: and the higher the state and the office, the more important and difficult the qualification becomes. Happiness is not derivable from any thing, without a suitableness to it. It does not depend upon the excellency of the object, but the conformity of the disposition. The acquisition must be *wanted, desired, hoped for,* before it can gratify and content. Have I, then, any thing in me that could find happiness in the heaven of the Scriptures?

If He has wrought us for the whole, he has bestowed upon us a part—*He has given us, also, the earnest of the Spirit.* The earnest is not only to insure—it is a portion of the payment: and so is distinguishable from a pledge, which is returned at the completion of the agreement: for the earnest remains, and goes on as a part of the bargain. This is very instructive. It tells us that what the believer has here in the possession and influence of the Spirit, is not only indicative of heaven, but like it—and a degree of it.

Is heaven perfect knowledge? The eyes of his understanding are now opened; already he spiritually discerns; and in God's light sees light.

Is it perfect holiness? He is already delivered from the power and love of every sin; he is renewed in the spirit of his mind; he delights in the law of God after the inward man.

Is it perfect happiness? exceeding joy? fulness of joy? pleasures for evermore?—But even now, blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. There remaineth a rest for the people of God—but "we which have believed do enter into rest." They

shall enter into peace—but now they have a "peace which passeth all understanding." They shall enter the joy of their Lord—but now, "believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They will then join the spirits of just men made perfect—but the saints are now their companions and their delight. They will then dwell in his house and be still praising Him—but they are already attempting and commencing his work: "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Such experience it is that weans them from the world, and makes them willing to depart. Heaven is not a distant, unknown good. They are come to the city of the living God. They are partakers of the glory that shall be revealed—They *have* everlasting life.

JAN. 27.—"*And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.*" Is. xxxiii. 24.

WHO can say so here? How many of our fellow-creatures, the subjects of infirmity, languor, and nervous apprehension, are saying, "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day"—Another is "chastened, also, with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: his flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen, stick out: yea, his soul draweth nigh unto the grave, and his life to the destroyer." There are few—perhaps none, who never feel indisposition or sickness.

Sickness is the effect of sin, which brought death into the world, and all our woe. It now (under the

providence of God, which is not only punitive, but salutary,) subserves various purposes. It is taken into covenant, so to speak, with the godly, and is one of the paths of the Lord, which *to them* are *all* mercy and truth. It checks them in going astray. It frees them from many a temptation, arising from more intercourse with the world. It gives them the most sensible proofs of the care, and kindness, and fidelity of their Lord and Saviour. He knows their frame, and has promised to be with them in trouble, and to comfort them on the bed of languishing—yea, to comfort them as one whom his mother comforteth; and she, while none of her children are neglected by her, will be sure to pay the most tender attentions to the poor little aching invalid.

Yet sickness is an evil in itself, and it is trying to flesh and blood. It not only deducts from the relish of all, and prevents entirely the enjoyment of some, of our outward comforts; but it injures, it hinders, the performance of a thousand duties, relative, civil, and religious. It also often brings a gloom over the mind, and genders unworthy apprehensions of God, and misgivings of our spiritual condition. It not only shuts us out from the loveliness of nature, but from the public means of grace, and fills us with a mournful pleasure at the thought of seasons when we went in company to the house of God, with the voice of joy and gladness, to keep holy day. Hence Hezekiah, anxious to ascertain his recovery, asked, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" How feelingly has Watts described the Lord's prisoner, when the Sabbath comes.

"Lo! the sweet day of sacred rest returns:
"———— But not to me returns
"Rest with the day. Ten thousand hurrying thoughts
"Bear me away tumultuous, far from heaven
"And heavenly work: alas! flesh drags me down
"From things celestial, and confines my sense
"To present maladies. Unhappy state!
"Where the poor spirit is subdued t' endure

"Unholy idleness; and painful absence
"From God and pray'r, and angels' blessed work;
"And bound to bear the agonies and woes,
"That sickly flesh and shattered nerves impose."

Well—soon the warfare with the body will be accomplished; and we shall put off the flesh, and be in joy and felicity. And as there will be no more sin, neither will there be any more pain; for the former things are all passed away.

A union with the body, were it to rise as it now is, would be dreaded, rather than desirable. But the body will not only be raised, but improved: improved beyond all our present comprehension, but not beyond our present BELIEF. For we can trust Him who has assured us, that though it be sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power: though it be sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body—and that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. We shall bear, not the image of the earthly, but of the heavenly. Our bodies will not be made like the body of Adam in Paradise, but like the Saviour's own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. No burdens, no depressions, then! No clogs, no confinements! No animal wants! No debasing appetites! No unruly passions! No fluttering heart! No aching head! "The inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick"—

"These lively hopes we owe
"To Jesu's dying love:
"We would adore his grace below,
"And sing his power above."

JAN. 28.—"*In the wilderness thou hast seen how the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went.*" Deut. i. 31.

THE image is parental. In another part of this book, the *reference is to a parent bird*: "As an eagle

stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him." Here the allusion is to a *human* parent; and it is worthy of remark, how often the allusion is made in the Scriptures. Thus to mention a few of them—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good gifts to them that ask him?" The softer sex is also adduced, and *maternal* tenderness supplies feeling as well as thought. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

Observe the image which Moses here employs. It regards a child, a young child; for it is too weak to go alone—it is borne. The father is here mentioned, not the mother: for the action of bearing requires strength, rather than tenderness. The mother may have been dead. When one parent is called to supply the place of both, an increase of care and kindness becomes necessary, and is soon felt. Imagine, therefore, an Israelite—deprived, in his journey through the wilderness, of the companion of his life—perhaps as soon as she had brought him forth a son—perhaps in consequence of it. The child, thus bereaved, is endeared by the decease of the mother, and *he* takes it, and bears it. How? Sometimes in his arms, and often in his bosom. How? Tenderly, softly—now pressing it to his lips, now soothing its cries, now lulling it to repose—feeding it, defending it, supplying all its wants!

All this God does in reality, and infinitely more—What is the goodness, the gentleness, the care of *the tenderest* being on earth, compared with the

disposition and kindness of God towards his people! When an image is applied to God, we must separate from it all its imperfections. A father may be unable to defend a child; he is sometimes absent from it: he cannot be always awake, and inspecting it; he may be ignorant of the cause of its complaint; he may not know what is good for it; he may decline in affection, and become heedless and negligent; he may become cruel, and abandon his charge. But nothing of all this can apply to Him, who bears us in all the way that we go.

Yea, we must not only strip the image of imperfection when we apply it to God, but we must attach to it divinity. Every human relation, however complete, is yet *finite* in its exercise and excellence: but His attributes are *infinite*. His love passeth knowledge. "He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."

Well—hast thou *seen* in the wilderness, how the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went? Let the sight affect your admiration, and induce you to exclaim, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" We talk of condescension; but what is the difference between one creature and another; one worm and another—But what is God! what are we! how mean, unworthy, guilty!—Let it draw forth

Your gratitude; and call upon your soul, and all that is within you, to bless his holy Name. "To him that led his people in the wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ever."

—Let it encourage you.

You are not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you; but he is with you in the way; and with you as your father; engaged to do all that such a relation requires. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Reason from the past to the future,

and, "because he has been your help, therefore, under the shadow of his wings, rejoice."—Let him be Your example. Job was a *father* to the poor, not a tyrant, or an overseer. Be *kind*, as well as bountiful. Be ye followers of God. In him the fatherless findeth mercy: let him find it in you also. "Be ye merciful, even as your Father which is in heaven is merciful."—Recommend him to others, and say to them, "Come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."—Oh, that the young, who are entering this wilderness world, would place themselves under his care, and beseech him to be the guide of their youth.—Oh, that the bereaved would think of Him, who can more than repair the losses which make them bleed. "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up."

JAN. 29.—"*And shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*" John xiv. 32.

THERE is a relation between Christ and Christians, and a conformity founded upon it; so that what *He* says, *they* may subordinately adopt as their own language.

There are cases in which they *may* be alone—and there are cases in which they *ought* to be alone—and there is one case in which they *must* be alone: and yet they are not alone, because the Father is with them.

They *may* be alone, by the dispensations of Providence. By death, lover and friend may be put far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness; and bereavements may force from solitude the

sigh, "I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the housetop." They have often been driven out of society by the wickedness of power. Their connexions have abandoned them through falseness, or deserted them through infirmity. And this is no inconsiderable trial. Our Saviour felt the desertion of his disciples; and said, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforter, and found none;" but looking upward, he said, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me. Joseph was separated from his family, and sold into Egypt, but the Lord was with Joseph. John was banished into the isle of Patmos; but there he had the visions of the Almighty, and was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. "At my first answer," says Paul, "no man stood by me, but all *men* forsook me; notwithstanding the *Lord* stood by me, and strengthened me."—Yes; whoever dies, the Lord liveth. Whoever fails us, He is firm. "He is faithful that hath promised. He hath said, *I* will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

They *ought* to be alone, by voluntary solitude. Not that they are to become recluses, by abandoning their stations, and shunning intercourse with their fellow-creatures. The Christian life is a candle; but a candle is not to be placed under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house: and our light is to shine before men: and they are to see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven. But *occasional* and *frequent* retirement for religious purposes, is a duty—and it will be found our privilege. We shall never be less alone than when alone. "Go forth," says God to Ezekiel, "into the field, and there will I talk with thee." Isaac, at eventide, was meditating in the field, when the Lord brought him Rebecca. Jacob was left alone, when he "obtained power with God," and with man, and prevailed. Nathanael was seen and encouraged under

the fig tree. Peter was by himself praying upon the housetop when he received the Divine manifestation. If the twelve Patriarchs, or the twelve Apostles, lived near us, and their presence drew us off from our closets, their neighbourhood would be a serious injury to us. No creature can be a substitute for God. And it is *alone* we hold the freest and fullest communion with Him. It is there the secret of the Lord is with us, and he shews us his covenant. There we become acquainted with ourselves. There we shake off the influences of the world. It is good to be there—

"Be earth with all her scenes withdrawn;
"Let noise and vanity be gone;
"In secret silence of the mind,
"My heaven, and there my God, I find."

— Men may live in a crowd, but they *must* die alone. Friends and ministers can only accompany us to the entrance of the pass. None of them can speak from experience, and tell us what it is to die. And it is a way we have not gone ourselves heretofore. But the Christian, though alone, is not alone—even *here*. "Yea," says David, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *thou* art with me: *thy* rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

"Death is a melancholy day
"To those that have no God."

But how must it be softened and cheered to those that have! O to have a God, the God of all grace, at hand, a very present help in that time of trouble; laying underneath his everlasting arms; shedding around the light of his countenance; communicating the joy of his salvation; and insuring the glory to be revealed—in ways beyond all our present experience and thought!

"O my God, what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

JAN. 30.—"*And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and when he had declared all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.*"

Acts x. 7, 8.

SUCH was his obedience to the heavenly vision. It was immediate, and well executed.

He did not himself go for Peter. This he would have readily done, but he was ordered by the angel *to send;* and *his* presence was proper and necessary at home. He was a man in office: and in command. He had a weighty trust reposed in him: and we are to abide with God in our callings.

The messengers he employed, were two of his household servants—which shews him to have been a man of some estate, besides his profession: and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually. Observe here—the officer himself was a devout man, and he has not only devoted, but devout soldiers. The master was godly, and the servants are the same: for it is said, Cornelius feared God with all his house; like Joshua, who said, "As for me, *and* my house, we will serve the Lord." This correspondence between the head and the members of the family, may be accounted for two ways. First; such a man will choose, as far as he can, those

that are religious to attend him—saying, with David, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." And secondly; he will be likely to render them such, if they are not such when he engages them. For he will be sure to use all the means in his power: and his own temper and example will harmonize with his efforts: and the grace of God, which he will never fail to implore, will honour him. Thus, they who are blessed, are also blessings, and for them the desert rejoices as a rose. Some are favoured by their opportunities and talents, to cultivate a large expanse of barrenness: but let us see, let us all see, whether we cannot convert a small spot at least, from waste, to smiling verdure: cultivate, if not the neighbouring moor, yet a cottage garden, and let the traveller say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon thee." Many a domestic has been thankful that he ever entered a pious family: there he has been made wise unto salvation, and has become a child of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. What a disgrace is it, for a Christian master and mistress to let a servant leave their family unable to read the Bible!

"So, having declared these things to them, he sent them to Joppa." Here we have, not a harsh injunction to a trembling slave; not a bare order, couched in a few unexplained terms; not the sealed instructions, the orders of a tyrant, who is to be implicitly obeyed, and is afraid to trust. Here is intercourse, openness; here is confidence in the master, reposing on principle in the servants. How happy, where the distinctions of life are preserved—and they are to be preserved; and yet there is union, and harmony; and condescension, and kindness; and unreserve on the one side, and respect and obedience, without encroachment, on the other. How

happy where authority is softened by gentleness, and submission by love: where indulgence breeds nothing like irreverence, and goodness is rewarded by diligence and fidelity. And in what connexions, in what families, is all this most likely to be found? "Men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles." Piety is the spring; the guard; the refinement; the glory of morality.

JAN. 31.—"*And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*"
Exod. xv. 25.

IT is useless to enquire what kind of tree this was, and whether the effect was produced by a quality inherent in the wood, or by a miraculous application—the latter is far the most likely. But it has been disputed, whether this transaction was designed to be an evangelical type. Perhaps it is impossible to determine this—and it is unnecessary. We shall only derive from it an illustration of a very interesting subject, in which we are fully justified by the words of the Apostle to the suffering Hebrews: "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

We, like these Jews, are travelling through a wildernes. In our journey we meet with bitter waters. These are the troubles of life, personal and relative. These are very distasteful and offensive to flesh and blood. But they may be rendered drinkable. In other words, we may be able to endure the afflictions of life—yea, we may even acquiesce in them; and not only so, but glory in tribulation also.

— But how can this be done? Here is the secret—

"The cross on which the Saviour died,
"And conquer'd for his saints;
"This is the tree, by faith applied,
"That sweetens all complaints.

"Thousands have proved the bless'd effect:
"No longer mourn their lot:
"While on his sorrows they reflect,
"Their own are all forgot.

"While they by faith behold the Cross,
"Though many griefs they meet,
"They draw a gain from every loss,
"And find the bitter sweet."

Let us see how the Saviour's sufferings will alleviate ours. It is some relief in distress that others are exercised in the same way. Individuality of woe looks ominous—it is appalling to be singled out like a victim deer from the whole herd, and suffer alone. Thus the Apostle tells the Corinthians that no temptation had taken them but such as is common to man—and Peter also tells the sufferers he addressed, that the same afflictions were accomplished in their brethren that were in the world. So it is—whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. This has been the case with even his most eminent servants. And even his "Dear Son," in whom his soul delighted—He, even he, did not escape. And shall we dread the fellowship of his sufferings?

But if there is something to affect the mind, even in the reality of his passion, there is much more in the greatness of it. In general, our groaning is heavier than our complaint; and we are prone, from our selfishness and ignorance, to imagine our trials pre-eminent. *He* could say, behold, and see if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow. In our sorrows we have alleviations. Ours are not perpetual; but his continued through life. Ours are not universal; but he suffered in every part that was capable of suffering—he was a man of sorrows. Ours are not foreknown; but his were

id out in prospect, and he suffered in appre-
on, as well as reality. No tongue can express,
derstanding conceive, what *he* bore when his
was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;
his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood
g to the ground!

"Now let our pains be all forgot,
"Our hearts no more repine;
"Our suff'rings are not worth a thought,
"When, Lord, compared with thine."

We must also think of the dignity of this sufferer.
commonly and properly feel more for those who
educed in life, than for those who have never
red a better estate, because the penury is em-
red by previous affluence. Job considers his
er greatness as an enhancement of his fall,
contrasts with the honours shewn him in his
perity, the insults now offered him by those
e fathers he would not have set with the dogs
is flock. "They were children of fools; yea,
ren of base men: they were viler than the
. And now I am their song; yea, I am their
ord. They abhor me, they flee far from me,
spare not to spit in my face." Jesus was the
of all; and all the angels of God worshipped

Yet was *he* despised and rejected of men;
as buffeted, scourged, spit upon; and not only
Scribes and Elders, but the soldiers, the common
le, and the very thieves, set him at nought, and
ed him. But who and what are we? Our foun-
n is in the dust. Man is a worm, and the son
an is a worm; and it is condescension in God
ave any thing to do with him, yea, even to chas-
him. "What is man, that thou shouldest mag-
him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart
him? And that thou shouldest visit him every
ing, and try him every moment?"

But the great may render themselves *worthy* of their humiliations; and often have been *righteously* punished. We suffer justly, because we suffer the due reward of our deeds. Good men themselves cannot complain, or even wonder, at their afflictions, when they consider their years of irreligion, and their sins, since they have known God, or rather have been known of him—for who can understand his errors? In the sudden and awful death of his two sons, Aaron held his peace—he had just before been aiding to make the golden calf. David had been recently guilty of adultery and murder; when therefore Absalom, his own son, as well as subject, rose against him, what could he but say, of his offended God, Here I am, let him do to me what seemeth good unto him. This consciousness also induced him to say, Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him, when Shimei cursed him, and Joab offered to go and slay him. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because, says the Church, I have sinned agninst him. But this man did nothing amiss—he was harmless, holy, separate from sinners. He could make the appeal to all his adversaries, Which of you convinceth me of sin? Yet he suffered—suffered, though *innocent*; and was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

His sufferings, therefore, were *for* us, only and entirely *for* us—and what can be more relieving in our sorrows, than to consider the *benefits* we derive from his? Such is the benefit of an atoning Sacrifice; by which we are delivered from all condemnation, and have peace with God, and access to him. What are trials? when there is no wrath in them; when they are only the effects of a father's care—the bitterness of death is past. Such is the benefit of a sympathising Friend; who, from his own experience, can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities—for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succour them

that are tempted. Such is the benefit of an Example; which shews us how to act and how to feel in the hour of trial—for he also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. Such is the benefit of Divine Influence; for by dying, he obtained for us the dispensation of the Spirit, which is therefore called his Spirit, and, without the supply of which, we must fail and sink—but his grace is sufficient for us.

How encouraging, too, is it to think of the issue of his sufferings. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God. Your sorrows also will have an end—and the same end. It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together.

FEBRUARY 1.—"*Do ye now believe?*" John xvi. 31.

THIS was in reply to the profession of his disciples. They had said unto him, "Now speakest thou plainly: now we are sure that thou knowest all things—by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

It is not easy to lay the emphasis with perfect certainty; and yet, according as it is laid, the language will strike us with some shades of difference.

We may consider the words as an *enquiry*. "Do ye now *believe?* I have a right to ask, and I do ask." He is not inattentive to our condition, and experience; our deficiencies, and improvements—And though he needeth not that any should testify of man, because he knoweth what is in man; yet he will know these things from ourselves; that we may be urged to consider—and be affected with our own communications.

We may consider them as a *censure.* "Do ye *now* believe? You ought to have believed long ago —yet, hitherto it would seem, according to your own avowal, you have not: that is, as you ought to have done, and as you might have done. How strange and blameable, that, with all your advantages, you have been, even down to this hour, filled with hesitation and doubts." For he can reprove, as well as encourage. Do ye not yet remember? Do ye not yet understand? After his resurrection, he upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart.

We may consider them as a *check to presumption.* "*Do* ye now believe? You think so; but have you not expressed yourselves with too much confidence? You now consider yourselves confirmed believers: and you suppose that you shall never err again; fail again. I know you better than you know yourselves. Imagination is not reality: and events will prove, that you have much less faith than you now suppose—"Behold the hour cometh and is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone."

There is a difference between hypocrisy and instability. We may feel what we utter at the time; but emotions are not principles: impulses are not dispositions. There may be goodness; but it is like the morning cloud and early dew, that soon passeth away. How often do we become a wonder, as well as a grief, to ourselves! How little do we know of our own hearts, till we are tried.—The little ants disappear in the cloudy and rainy day; and the observer might suppose they were all dead. But let the sun shine forth; and they are again all alive, and in motion. There is the same mud at the bottom of the water when calm; but the waves thereof cast up the mire and dirt.

Let us not therefore make too much of frames and feelings: nor imagine, because we are now

alking in the light of God's countenance, that we all never again mourn his absence. Behold, the our cometh when we may consider all our present y as only a delusion. Do we now believe? change in the weather, a depression of animal pirits, may renew all our doubts and fears; and ake us all apprehension again.

Therefore let us rejoice with trembling. Let s remember our own weakness; and instead of epending on the grace that is in us, be strong in ie grace that is in Christ Jesus.

"Beware of Peter's word,
"Nor confidently say,
"I never *will* deny thee, Lord;
"But grant I never may.

"Man's wisdom is to seek
"In God his strength alone;
"And e'en an angel would be weak
"That trusted in his own."

FEB. 2.—"*O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*" Ps. lv. 6.

WHOSE exclamation is this? It is obviously the anguage of a man not at rest. And if we read he preceding and following verses, we shall find hat the complainant was, indeed, really in trouble. And so are many. It seems inseparable from humaiity. Man that is born of a woman is of few days nd full of trouble.

But who was *this* man? One of those deemed he darlings of Providence: a man who had expeienced one of the most marvellous revolutions recorded in history. For he was originally nothing more than a shepherd; but rose from obscurity, nd became a hero, a renowned conqueror, a

powerful monarch. He had given him the necks of his enemies and the hearts of his subjects; and we might have supposed him sated with victory, and glory, and dominion, and riches. But from the midst of all this he sighs, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest!" For, with all his aggrandizements, how much did he suffer from implacable malevolence! How much also from some of his own officers, and especially his nephew Joab, the commander-in-chief! After rearing his fine palace of cedar, he could not for a length of time take possession of it: for he was sick nigh unto death; and week after week saw the graves ready for him. And suppose they had brought out his crown and imposed it upon him—would this have eased an aching head, or have relieved the anguish of a disordered body? What is an ornamented room in the rage of a fever? Then his own house was not so with God. What a distracted and wretched family! His daughter is humbled. The incestuous brother is murdered. The murderer becomes a traitor, and drives his father, as well as king, into exile. In his flight, he is told that Ahithophel, his bosom friend and councillor, is among the conspirators with Absalom. Who can tell what other sorrows corroded him! The heart knoweth his own bitterness. There are griefs that we cannot pour even into the bosom of intimacy. There are thorns in the nest that pierce through the down that lines it, but are known and felt only by the occupier. Did David never regret the loss of the privacy of Bethlehem?

The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. We are prone to think that, though *generally* men are born to trouble, there are some exempted individuals; and that though, commonly considered, this earth is a vale of tears, there are some privileged spots. And it is worthy our observation, that these exceptions always belong to *others*, and always to

those who are *above* us. Is the servant happy? He will when he is master. Is the master happy? He will when he is rich. Is the rich man happy? He will when he is ennobled, and has distinction as well as gold. Is the nobleman happy? He will when he is king. Is the king—the king happy? Oh, says he, oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!

Let us remember this, and not be afraid when one is made rich, and the glory of his house is increased. Let us check the risings of ambition, and not seek great things to ourselves. Let us learn in whatsoever state we are, to be content; and follow the moderation of the Patriarch, who asked only for bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and a safe return to his father's house in peace.

Felicity depends not upon external condition, but the state of the mind. Paul was happy in prison, while Nero was miserable in a palace. Haman, after telling his wife and his friends all his promotion and glory, adds, Yet all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. On that night could not the king sleep.

> "Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep—
> "He, like the world, his ready visit pays
> "Where fortune smiles."

But is this true? No. Sleep, sound, wholesome, refreshing sleep, has least to do where fortune smiles. His ready visits are paid to the early rising, the temperate, the diligent: the sleep of a labouring man is sweet. "The wretched," indeed, "he forsakes." But where does he find them? Here is one of them—the ruler of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces—on that night could not the king sleep. Ahab, the monarch of Israel, is melancholy, and sick, and cannot eat, because he cannot obtain Naboth's little parcel of ground for a garden of herbs; and neither his happiness or health could go on till

his worthy helpmate taught him to gratify his wish by the destruction of the nobleminded peasant. How wise was the answer of the Shunamite, when Elisha offered to speak for her to the king—"I dwell among my own people." If we are not content with such things as we have, we shall never be satisfied with such things as we desire. If there is a difference in outward conditions, it lies against those who fill the higher ones. Their want of occupation—the listlessness far worse than any labour they feel—the little relish they have of natural refreshment—their sufferings from weak nerves and timid spirits—their squeamish anxieties about their health—the softening of their disposition by indulgence and ease, so that they are unable to endure—their sensibility under trifling vexations, which others despise—their leisure to brood over and hatch a progeny of dangers—the envies to which they are liable—their cares, fears, responsibilities, and dependance—the unreasonable things expected from them, and their inability to give satisfaction to expectants—Where shall I end? These, and a thousand other things, should be enough to show the poor and the busy that those who are placed above them are proportionably taxed.

Neither, however, is the opposite state the most desirable. As far as happiness depends on any outward condition, there lies—between the extremes of prosperity and adversity, penury and affluence—the most eligible choice. If life be a pilgrimage, man, the traveller, is best prepared for advancing, not when the shoe pinches, or when it is large and loose; but when it fits—Not when he is destitute of a staff to lean upon, or when he has a large bundle of staves to carry; but when he has one, which affords him assistance without incumbrance. Pray we therefore, "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full,

and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

FEB. 3.—"*Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence.*" Deut. xxiv. 18.

THE bondage of Egypt, under Pharaoh's tyranny and task-masters, was nothing to the bondage of corruption, in which sinners are naturally held, and the power of darkness, from which we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And the freedom the Jews obtained, when they were delivered by a strong hand and a stretched-out arm, was not to be compared with the glorious liberty of the sons of God—for if the Son makes us free, we are free indeed.

And this redemption is what we are called to remember. The admonition may seem needless. For can such a deliverance be ever forgotten? We should once have deemed it impossible; but we are prone to forget his works, and the wonders which he has shewn us. The event, indeed, can never be completely forgotten. But we need to have our minds stirred up by way of remembrance. And for four purposes—"Thou shalt remember, that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt—but the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence."

First, for the purpose of humility. We are prone to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think: but with the lowly is wisdom. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble—and surely we have enough to hide pride from us, if we reflect properly. If we are now wise, we were once foolish; if we are now justified, we were once condemned; if we are now the sons of God, we were

once the servants of Sin.—Let us look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged.

Secondly, we should remember it for the purpose of gratitude. If we are affected with the kindnesses shewn us by our fellow-creatures, shall we overlook our infinite Benefactor? Were they under no obligation to relieve us? Had we forfeited our lives to them? Did they deliver us from the lowest hell? Did they become poor to enrich us, and die that we may live? But we have no claims upon *Him*, for the least of all his mercies; and therefore should be thankful for all his benefits—*Herein* is love. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

Thirdly, we should remember it for the purpose of confidence. David argued from the past to the future; and said, Because thou hast been my help, therefore, under the shadow of thy wings, will I rejoice. But here we have a peculiar reason for encouragement. For what were we when He first took knowledge of us? Was he not found of them that sought him not? Was the want of worthiness a bar to his goodness then? And will it be so now? Is there with Him any variableness or shadow of turning? Is there not the same power in his arm, and the same love in his heart! Did he pardon me when a rebel, and will he cast me off now he has made me a friend? "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Fourthly, we should remember it for the purpose of pity and zeal. How many are there all around you, in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, ready to perish! You know the state they

are in; and you know the blessedness of a deliverance from it. You are witnesses for God of what he is able and willing to do. Invite the prisoners of hope to turn to him—you can speak from experience. Say to the destitute, That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

FEB. 4.—"*And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord, which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*"

Gen. xxxii. 9—12.

WE cannot too much admire the conduct of Jacob, on this trying occasion; when he had to meet his enraged brother Esau. The religion that, aiming at something uncommon and preternatural, disregards the plain dictates of reason and revelation, is always to be suspected; and, on the other hand, caution and exertion, unaccompanied with a devout dependence upon God, is the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with Him—and he will take the wise in their own craftiness. Therefore, prudence and piety should always be connected together. Accord-

ingly, Jacob sends forward a deputation, with a soft answer that turneth away wrath; and arranges his company and cattle in the wisest order—But what does he *then?* When we have done all that we can do—to what does it amount? "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain:" and unless he gives his beloved sleep, "in vain we rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows." When we have planned, and are setting all our measures in motion, then is the time to take hold of God, and say, "O Lord, I beseech thee, send *now* prosperity." Jacob, therefore, now prays; and as this prayer was heard, and He who teaches us how to pray is our best friend, let us glance at the particulars which God has here noticed.

Observe the relation under which he addresses the Supreme Being—"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." As much as to say, my family God; and my God in covenant. This was laying hold of his faithfulness, as well as goodness, and asking *in faith.* We have another title under which to bespeak attention—The God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This inspires more abundant hope; and involves more exceeding great and precious promises; and reminds us of a covenant made with *him,* and *so* with us, everlasting, ordered in all things, and sure.

He appeals to the will of God in his present difficulty—"Thou saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee"—I am now in a strait, but I have been brought into it by following thee. This was wise. They that suffer according to the will of God, may commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing: and it affords great relief to the mind, and much aids our confidence, when we are conscious that the embarrassments we feel have not been brought upon ourselves, but have befallen us in the path of

duty. And how does it add to the pressure of the burden, and the bitterness of the cup, when God asks, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" and conscience cries, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" Let no man, therefore, suffer as a murderer, as a thief, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. We complain of the world: and there are many unavoidable evils in life; but there is a large multitude entirely of our own producing, and God is no otherwise accessary to them, than as he has, in the nature of things and the course of providence, established a connexion between folly and misery.

He shews his humility: "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." This temper is not natural to us; but grace brings us down, and keeps us from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. And we cannot have too much of this self-abasing disposition; it will keep us from exercising ourselves in great matters, and in things too high for us; it will keep us from murmuring under our trials; it will teach us, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content; and it will dispose us in every thing to give thanks—for only in proportion as we are humble, can we be thankful.

Jacob, therefore, acknowledges the kindness of God towards him. More than twenty years before, he had crossed the same river where he now was. At that time he had no inheritance; no, not so much as to set his foot on. He was going forth, a poor pilgrim, in search of subsistence; and all that he ever stipulated for, was bread to eat, and raiment to put on; and a return to his father's house in peace. From this condition he had been raised to affluence; and his family and his flock had equally multiplied. Therefore, says he, "For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands"—alluding to the division which he had just made of

his household and his substance. We should do well often to review life; and to mark the changes which have taken place in our stations and circumstances. Have not many attained conditions, which would once have appeared the most improbable? Yet the Lord has made windows in heaven—and such things have been. Yet he has brought the blind by a way that they knew not; and made darkness light before them. Those born in the lap of ease, and whose course has been always even, cannot enter into the feelings of those who have found themselves advanced, without any designs formed by their friends, or expectations indulged by themselves. But how sad will it be, if they want the disposition of Jacob; and, forgetting that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, sacrifice to their own net.

Observe his petition: "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Here nature speaks; and we are allowed to feel, and even to desire the cup may pass from us, with submission to the will of God. How much was there here to awaken anxiety and dread! not only his own death, but the destruction of each of his wives—and each a mother too—and of his children also—and of the mother *with* the children; or, as it is in the margin, the mother upon the children—So it would have been. On the approach of the executioner, she would have thrown herself upon them, to cover and defend them; and in vain would he have endeavoured to pull her away: she would have been slaughtered upon their bodies.

Finally, his argument: "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." He had mentioned this before—Thou saidst, I will deal well with thee: and now he repeats it.

It was a sweet morsel, and he rolls it under his tongue. It was a breast of consolation, and he sucks till he is satisfied. It shows us that promises do not supersede prayer. If God has engaged to do a thing, it will indeed be accomplished, but in his own way; and he has ordained the means, as well as the end. The promises furnish us both with matter and encouragement when we pray: and we cannot do better than to repeat them, and to plead them with God. This, says an old writer, is suing God upon his own bond. "Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope."

FEB. 5.—"*That, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*" 1 Thess. v. 10.

How well does the Apostle call the Redeemer "our life." There are three modes of expression by which our relation to him under this character is held forth: and they all furnish matter for the most important meditation. We are said to live *by* Him—"He that loveth me, even he, shall live *by* me." We are said to live *to* Him—"They that live, should not live unto themselves, but *unto* Him that died for them, and rose again." And we are said to live *with* Him—"That, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together *with* him."

To judge of this state, we must consider where he lives; and how he lives; and what he is: and how far he is able, by his presence, to bless us, and make us happy. For though our happiness, with such a nature as ours, must be social, it is not a privilege to live with every one. With some, it would be a misery to dwell even here; and to have our "portion with the hypocrites and unbelievers;" and to be with "the devil and his angels;" this will be a dreadful

part of hell hereafter. But O, to unite with those who will be all loveliness; to embrace, without any fear of separation, those who were endeared to us on earth; to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; to join the innumerable company of angels! But, above all, to live with Jesus! To be with him, where he is, to behold his glory! To walk with him in white! To reign with him! For ever and ever!—This is far better.

The season for enjoying it is, "whether we wake," *i.e.* live; or "whether we sleep," *i.e.* die. It takes in, therefore, time and eternity: our living with him in earth and in heaven; in the communions of grace, and the fellowships of glory. These are inseparably connected, and are essentially one, and the same condition with regard to him; but they differ in degree, as the bud and the flower, the dawn and the day, the child and the man differ. His people live with him now, but not as they will live with him hereafter. Now he is invisible—then they will see him as he is. Now their intercourse with him is mediate, and often interrupted—then it will be immediate, and free from any annoyance. Now they are with him in the wilderness—then they will be with him in the land flowing with milk and honey. Now they groan, being burdened with infirmities, and cares, and troubles—then they will be presented faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. Yet, whether they *wake* or *sleep*, they live together with him.

And does not this more than indicate his divinity? How else can they live with him *now?* He is no more here, as to his bodily presence—for the heavens have received him. Yet, where two or three are gathered together in his Name, he is in the midst of them. Yet he said, Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Yet, says the Apostle, We live with him even while we *wake!* Yet, at the same time, others live with him when

hey *sleep*—The dead are with him above, while he living are with him below! How? unless he ervades all periods, and occupies all places? How? nless he can say, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" t is obvious the Apostle viewed him as omni-resent; and could say, "Whom have I in *heaven* ut Thee? and there is none upon *earth* I desire esides Thee."

Here is your happiness, Christians; it is your nion with Christ. This prepares you for all seasons, nd all conditions. Do you think of life? This is ometimes discouraging; especially when you con-emplate the prospect in a moment of gloom. But hy should you be dismayed? If you *wake*, you ill live together with him. If your continuance ere be prolonged, you will not be alone; He will lways be within call, and within reach. He will ender every duty practicable, and every trial sup-ortable, and every event profitable. And there-ore, whatever be your circumstances, you may oldly say, "Nevertheless I am continually with hee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after-ard receive me to glory."—Do you think of death? This is often distressing, and there is much in it o dismay—if viewed separate from Him. But if ou *sleep*, you will live together with him. Death, hat severs every other bond, cannot touch the igatures that unite you to him. As you leave thers, you approach nearer to him: you get more erfectly into his presence—you are for ever with he Lord.

Voltaire more than once says, in his Letters o Madame Duffand, "I hate life, and yet I am fraid to die." A Christian fears neither of these. le is willing to abide: and he is ready to go. Life i his. Death is his. Whether we wake or sleep, e shall live together with him.

FEB. 6.—"*And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*" Luke xxiv. 13—15.

THE name of the one, was Cleopas; of the other, we are ignorant. We are also unacquainted with the design of this journey—But it betrayed the imperfection of these disciples. For is it not astonishing, that they could leave Jerusalem *before* they had *ascertained* an event so interesting as his resurrection; especially as he had more than once assured them, that he should rise again the third day; and certain women, early at the sepulchre, had reported that the body was missing, and that they were informed by a vision of angels, that he was alive; and, also, some from among themselves had gone to the grave, and found it even as they had said—yet they walk off into the country in the midst of all this perplexity! Such is our impatience! Such is our fear! Such is our despondency!—But he that believeth maketh not haste.

Yet, a drop *is* water, and a spark *is* fire: and a little grace *is* grace, and perfectly distinguishable from mere Nature. And we have here, not only infirmity, but excellency. Their minds cleave unto him still; and they can talk about nothing else—and he joins them. Let me not pass over this without remark.

It shews the Saviour's kindness and tenderness. He does not despise the day of small things, nor cast off those who have a little strength. I know not what kind of person he had. But if he had not bodily beauty; in his mind, he was fairer than the children of men. I am sure of his temper—I can look into his heart, and see that it is made of love:

"A bruised reed will he not break; and the smoking flax will he not quench; but will bring forth judgment unto victory."

It shews me the truth of the promise. "*Where*"—let it be where it will; in the temple, the private dwelling, the field, the road: "where *two* or three"—if there are no more; for, as he is not confined to place, so neither to number—"are gathered together in my Name, *there* am I in the midst of them."

I also learn, that the way to have him for our companion, is to make him our theme. No theme ought to be so dear—no theme can be so excellent—so profitable.

Let worldly minds pursue the things of the world. But let Christians abundantly utter the memory of *his* great goodness; and mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord. And then he will be present—He *is* there.

"We'll talk of all he did and said,
"And suffer'd for us here below;
"The path he mark'd for us to tread,
"And what he is doing for us now.

"Thus, as the moments pass away,
"We'll love, and wonder, and adore;
"And hasten on the glorious day,
"When we shall meet to part no more."

FEB. 7.—"*Take up thy bed, and walk.*" John v. 8.

WE are too prone to overlook the circumstantial and incidental instruction of the Sacred writers—forgetful that every word of God is pure; and that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning. Let us not lose any of this hid treasure, for want of observing, and applying what we read.

Our Saviour met with this man at the pool of Bethesda; but no sooner had he pronounced the word of healing, than he orders him to take up *his bed*, and walk. He has always reasons for his conduct, though they are not always perceptible. But I think we can see four reasons for this command.

First, it was to evince the perfection of the cure. His walking, indeed, would prove this, but his taking up his bed, and being able to carry that in which he had been carried, would display it still more, as it shewed his strength as well as health. We often refer to miracles; and they are the witness of the Spirit. But the question is, were they true? Never could any thing have been more remote from imposition, than the miracles recorded in the Gospel. Examine them. They were many—they were public—they were performed before witnesses interested in their detection, had they been false. The circumstances, too, were always corroborative. Does he raise the dead? The young man was carrying to his burial, attended with much people. Lazarus was in his grave, and had been dead four days. Does he recover the infirm and the diseased? The man, whose eyes he opened, was born blind. And this paralytic had been afflicted thirty-eight years; and in a moment he was made whole, and was seen by all going home with his bed upon his shoulders.

Secondly, it was to teach him to be careful, and to waste nothing. The bed probably was not very valuable, but he was not to throw it away. In correspondence with this, after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, even then, when he had shown with what ease he could multiply resources, and support his creatures, he said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Christians should avoid closeness and meanness, lest their good be evil spoken of; but there is another extreme they should be anxious to avoid: it is profusion—yea, negligence and carelessness. They ought not to

love money; but they should know the use and worth of it; and remember that they are responsible for all they have. How needy are many; and how ready would they be to call down the blessing of Heaven upon you for a few mites; for the remnants of your wardrobe; for the refuse of your garden; for the crumbs that fall from your table! Be examples of economy yourselves. Teach your children to be prodigal of nothing. You would dismiss a servant that purloined; keep no one that wastes. How unfrugal often are the poor! How few of them seem to know how to make the most of any of their pittances! Let them be instructed personally and by tracts.

Thirdly, as a memento of his deliverance and duty. When at home, and looking on this bed, he would say—"Ah! there I lay, a poor enfeebled creature; and said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord, remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall: my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled within me. This I call to mind, therefore have I hope." It is a sad charge against Israel, that they *soon* forgat His works, and the wonders that he had shewn them. We are prone to the same evil; and need every assistance to aid recollection. Joseph and Moses made the very names of their children remembrances. Samuel set up a stone, and called it Ebenezer. Some have set apart particular days. Some have kept diaries—

> "Why should the wonders he has wrought,
> "Be lost in silence, and forgot?"

Fourthly, to try his obedience. Carrying his bed was a servile work; and it was now the Sabbath, on which day no burden was to be borne. He seemed therefore to oppose the law of Moses; and accordingly the Pharisees were offended, and murmured.

But works of necessity and mercy were *always* proper; and the Sabbath was made for man; and the Son of Man was Lord even of the Sabbath-day. And it is pleasing to find that the man's mind was informed, as well as his body cured; and to hear him reasoning with the objectors as he does. "He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." How fine, how instructive is this?—We are not to judge the Lord's commands, but to follow them.—His orders may be trying, and in obeying them we may give offence: but we need not mind the revilings of men, while we can plead his authority.—It is our deliverer, our benefactor, who enjoins; and what has *He* said unto us? He that died for us, and saved us from the wrath to come; what will *He* have me to do? He that made me whole, the *same* says unto me, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

FEB. 8.—"*And he was there in the prison.*" Gen. xxxix. 20.

—BUT he was not there *criminally;* but under an imputation, as false as it was infamous. How little can we judge of character from outward condition! At one time, the best people in the country were to be found at the stake, or in prison. But it is the cause, and not the cross, that makes the martyr. Let us see, that, like Daniel, we are accused only in the law of our God: and resemble Paul, who suffered *as* an evil doer, even unto bonds, but *was* not one. Let us beware of drawing upon ourselves deserved reproach or persecution, by imprudent or immoral conduct: "For what glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?"

"And he was there in the prison"—But he was not *alone* there. But the Lord was with Joseph—No doubt of it; for he hath said, "I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee." No situation can exclude God from access to his people; or keep them from intercourse with God. Jeremiah found him in the deep dungeon; John, in the isle of Patmos; and Paul, on the sea. His people sometimes wonder at this; the experience is beyond their expectation; and they say, with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not." But they might know it; especially if it be a scene of distress—for has he not said, "I will be with thee in trouble?"

"And he was there in the prison"—But he was not *miserable* there. All was peace within. His rejoicing was this, the testimony of his conscience. How much happier was he in this respect, than his vile mistress, who had knowingly belied him; and his brethren, who had cruelly sold him—how galled often would they be by reflection and self-reproach! How much happier was he, the suffering slave, than Potiphar, his prosperous master—yea, than Pharaoh upon the throne! Strange as it may seem, this prisoner, in this wretched confinement, was by far the happiest man in Egypt. But he had the presence of God. This presence makes the fulness of joy above; and this presence here, turns a prison into a palace—into a temple. The world marvels to see how Christians are sustained and consoled in their afflictions; but the reason is, they cannot see all: they can see their burdens, but not the everlasting arms underneath them: they can see their sorrows, but not the comforts of the Holy Ghost shed abroad in their hearts—But they themselves know, that as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, the consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

"And he was there in the prison"—But he was not there in *vain*. He was a witness for the God of Israel; and the very manner of his suffering;

his temper; his carriage—if he had said nothing, would have impressed all that beheld him. But he would also speak a word in season; and his addresses, enforced by his example, would carry weight with them. He taught the master of the prison; and his fellow-sufferers; and explained the dreams of the chief baker and butler; and thus raised wonder, and gained confidence, which he failed not to turn to advantage.—There, also, he was himself at school; and gained much useful knowledge, while "the word of the Lord tried him." His tribulation wrought patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. In the prison, he was prepared for the palace. By his adversity, he was made meet for prosperity. He could well say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

"And he was there in the prison"—But he was not there *always*. Nothing could detain him when the word of the Lord came, and commanded his deliverance. Till then, he relied on God's promise; but his confidence was sorely exercised: the event was not only delayed, but seemed to grow less probable, and the gloom thickened. But he found, that it is good for a man not only to hope, but quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. At length, and not a moment beyond his own appointed time, and not a moment beyond the best time, the Lord appeared; and from prison he steps into the second chariot in Egypt.

Christians, the God you serve is continually able to deliver you. If you have his word, lay hold of it; and let it keep your mind in perfect peace, being stayed on Him. You have nothing to do with difficulties—indeed there *are* none where the truth of God is concerned. You believe in God the Father *Almighty*, Maker of heaven and earth—*He* turneth the shadow of death into the morning. At evening tide, it shall be light.

FEB. 9.—*"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."* Ps. xxxiv. 2.

WE are prone to boast; and there is scarcely any thing that does not often call forth the tendency. Some boast of their beauty—Some, of the multitude of their riches—Some, of their pedigree and rank—Some, of their genius, and learning, and knowledge. Some boast of their wickedness; which is glorying in their shame. Some boast of their goodness, when, too, they *have* none; for there is a generation who are pure in their own eyes, and are not washed from their filthiness. But they who have "the root of the matter" in them—Have *they* any right to boast? Is their religion derived from themselves? Is it self-sustained? Is it perfect? Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? The law of faith—for "it is of faith, that it might be of grace." And this is its language: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

But here we see, that we may glory in Him, though we are forbidden to glory in creatures, or in ourselves. Accordingly, David says, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." And so ought we to resolve. And there are moments and frames, when, surveying Him in his works, and perfections, and promises, the believer can exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory—

"All my capacious powers can boast,
"In thee most richly meet:
"Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
"Nor friendship half so sweet."

"What a Friend have I! a tried, kind, almighty, everlasting Friend: a Friend who loveth at all times, and has sworn that he will never leave me nor forsake me—'This is my beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.' What a shepherd have I! The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." What a God is mine! The God of truth; the God of all grace; a God in covenant; a God in Christ—This God is my God, for ever and ever: he will be my guide even unto death. What a portion is mine! "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

But not only is included here, the elevation of joyous feeling, arising from the view and possession of magnificent good; but also the breaking forth of gratitude and praise. The selfish and the proud dislike the thought of dependence, and wish every acquisition to be considered as of their own procuring: "therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag." But pious minds ever delight to own, that they have nothing but what they have received. It is very painful to be under obligations to an enemy; but how pleasant is it to be indebted to one we admire and love! They who, therefore, supremely love their God and Saviour, make their boast in the Lord. They will *hereafter* cast their crowns before the Throne; and

their language now is, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

David supposes that his doing this would be known—"The humble shall hear thereof." They would possibly hear it from others: for the godly have their observers, and "are men wondered at." They were likely to hear it from himself. Therefore, says he, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue." Spiritual sadness seeks seclusion and concealment. Then, as the stricken dear leaves the herd, the man sitteth alone and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him. Peter went out and wept bitterly. But spiritual freedom and joy soon discover themselves. Like the return of health, and of day, it says to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. When Hannah was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, it is said, she prayed in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. But when she had succeeded, she broke forth into a song, and said, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation."

David also inferred the effect this knowledge would produce in them—"The humble shall hear thereof, and be *glad*." He could reckon upon this, from his own disposition; and from the connexion

there is between all the subjects of divine grace. They are all one in Christ Jesus. They belong to the same family: they are parts of the same body; and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice. They who have prayed for me, will not refuse to praise—"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy Name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." What sight can be so gratifying to a good man, as to see a convert leaving the world, and entering the Church: a backslider returning into the path of peace: a believer walking worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called: a dying saint joyful in glory, and shouting aloud upon his bed?—They that fear Thee, will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy truth.

— The Lord's followers are supposed to be mopish and melancholy: but they have a thousand sources of joy which others know not of. How great is the pleasure they derive *even from others.* Indeed they can often rejoice on the behalf of their brethren, when they fear things are not going on well with themselves. But what a proof is this feeling, that their heart *is* right with God!

— Envy is the rottenness of the bones, and the temper of the Devil. To rejoice in another's good, is Christian—angelical—divine. God is love. And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

FEB. 10.—"*Be sober.*" 1 Thess. v. 8.

THIS stands opposed to bodily excess, and especially to drunkenness. It is painful to think that it should be ever necessary even to mention such a subject among those who ever profess to be Christians.

he Spartans presented to their children intoxicated aves, that seeing their beastly demeanour, they ight detest the vice. Some Pagan legislators flicted a double punishment upon crimes committed in a state of drunkenness. Christian lawivers and judges are not equally wise and just; or how scandalous is it to hear men, in a court of ustice, allege their intoxication to extenuate, if ot to justify, their conduct. Drunkenness takes way the man, and leaves the brute. It dethrones eason from its seat. It covers the wretch with ags; and reduces his wife and children to want nd beggary. It impairs appetite: produces trembling of limbs; and such sinking of spirits, as almost ompels to the repetition of the offence; so that, hysically, as well as morally, it is next to impossile to cure it.

Let me therefore guard against it; and not only n the *grossness,* but the *guilt.* Some professors of eligion seem to think they are *not* chargeable with he sin, if they can keep their eyes open, and walk rom the dining-room to the tea-table, not consilering that every indulgence beyond natural relief nd refreshment is vicious; and that the Scripture eculiarly condemns those, who, by gradual training, have made themselves *strong* to drink wine, and o mingle strong drink. Let me, therefore, beware f the encroaching *degree;* and put a knife to my hroat if *given* to appetite. And instead of being illed with wine, wherein is excess, let me be filled vith the Spirit.

But the pure and holy religion of Jesus, when t says, "Be sober," forbids much more than this vile and offensive practice. It enjoins temperance n *all* our appetites, desires, and affections. It exends even to businesses: as a man may be entangled, so he may be intoxicated with the affairs of this ife: and how often do the cares of the world, and he deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and

it becometh unfruitful. *A Christian* may be too mindful of earthly things: too alive to fame; too anxious to join house to house, and add field to field, and to load himself with thick clay. As a man inebriated is unfit for the duties of his station, and is obliged to be confined; so it is with those who set their affection on things below. They are unqualified for their high calling; and cannot walk as becometh the Gospel.

"Seekest thou great things unto thyself?" says Jeremiah unto Barach; "seek them not." Let me reflect, in the light of Scripture and observation, on the vanity of worldly things; their unsatisfactoriness in possession; their perishing in the using; and the many and hurtful lusts to which they expose the owner;—and let my conversation be without covetousness; and let me be content with such things as I have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Sleep is a natural and necessary refreshment. But we may be excessive in this, as well as in any other indulgence. And, alas! how often are we—even to the injury of our health, as well as the waste of our time.

Recreation is allowable and salutary: but we may exceed the bounds which the redemption of time, and the repairing and refitting us for duty, can only allow.

Paul exhorts Timothy to be "sober-minded." How intemperate are some in their opinions; and opinions, especially in religion, that regard inferior truths; and subjects concerning which the understanding meets with the greatest difficulties. Some are eager, and rash, and positive in all their judgments; and nothing is too absurd or ridiculous for their adoption.

Again, let me hear the Apostle. "I say to every man that is amongst you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think

soberly:" *i. e.* not overrating his station, his connexions, his abilities, his usefulness, his performances: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

Finally, let me not forget how *obviously*, as well as extensively, I am to discharge this obligation; nor lose sight for a moment of the *argument* by which it is enforced—"LET YOUR MODERATION BE KNOWN UNTO ALL MEN—THE LORD IS AT HAND."

FEB. 11.—"*The children of the day.*"
1 Thess. v. 5.

THREE distinctions may be here made. The first, regards Heathens. The second, the Jews. The third, Christians.

Heathens are the children of *night*. With regard to them, darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. What did *they* know of God: of themselves; of their origin; their fall; their recovery; their duty? What did they know of a future state? A few of their philosophers spoke of the immortality of the soul; but none of them thought of the resurrection of the body, unless to turn it into ridicule. And what they expressed, they did but conjecture; they could prove and establish nothing. And they held it in unrighteousness; it had no influence over them as a motive; for wanting the certainty of a principle, it wanted the efficacy. And they kept it from the people at large; and employed no means to inform the multitude, who, as quite sufficient for them, were abandoned to every kind of superstition.

The *Jews* were all children of the *dawn;* an intermediate state between night and day; better than the former, and very inferior to the latter.

Hence the Saviour, alluding, not to the state of Pagans, but to the disadvantages of Judaism, said to his disciples, "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them." They had the Law, which was given by Moses: but we have grace and truth, that came by Jesus Christ. They had the shadows; we have the substance. They had the types, and the promises; we, the realization, and the accomplishment. To them, the Sun of Righteousness was below the horizon; on us, he has risen with healing under his wings—God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.—For

Christians are the children of the *day*. It is their privilege to have the system of Revelation complete; and to be blessed with the full dispensation of the glorious Gospel. They have the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto men the way of salvation.

Every thing with us is made dear, in proportion as it is important. And with regard to the acceptance of our persons with God, the renovation of our nature, our title to eternal life, our meetness for glory, our supplies of grace, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; the darkness is entirely passed, and the true light now shineth—and we are the children of the day.

Therefore, let us hail it with gratitude. And what thanks can ever equal the benefit? A mud cottage with the Scriptures in it, is more ennobled, in the view of an angel, than the palace of the richest emperor upon earth. David would have descended from his throne, and have passed his days in a poor-house, to have enjoyed our advantages. Abraham, at the distance of near two thousand years, rejoiced to see our day, saw it, and was glad.

Therefore, let us receive it with joy. Nature shews off her beauties: the lambs play; the birds

carol their notes—every thing seems to welcome the approach of day. Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. And shall the Gospel, this day of good things, inspire us with dread and gloom? Is it not intended, is it not adapted to make even our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour? And was it not thus always regarded among the first Christians?

Therefore we should improve it with diligence. The sun ariseth, and man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening—The night is for inaction. They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober. And knowing the time, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Advantages infer obligations, and produce responsibility. Where much is given, much will be required. What do ye more than others? asks the Saviour. And he has a right to ask.

— He also says, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. Blessed Jesus! possess me with thy own Spirit; and, henceforth repelling every interruption, and crushing every indecision and delay, may I make thy purpose and zeal my own: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day —the night cometh wherein no man can work."

FEB. 12.—"*And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.*" Numb. x. 31.

SUCH was the language of the Jewish leader to Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-

law. How numerous are our wants, in whatever condition we are found! We need food to nourish us, apparel to cover us, sleep to refresh us, friendship to succour us. We need the heart of one of our fellow-creatures, and the hand of another. One must be feet to us; another eyes. Who is self-sufficient? Who, but under the delusion of pride and vanity, would ever affect independence? The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee. Nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which are feeble, are necessary. Above others in circumstances, we may be inferior to them in grace or experience, or some particular attainment. David was superior to Jonathan in divine things; yet "Jonathan went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hands in God." I long to see you, says Paul to the Romans, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, that ye may be established: but they aided and confirmed him first: for they came down to meet him as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns; and when he saw them, *he* thanked God, and took courage.

Here we see the advantage of society. A God of knowledge and truth has said, It is not good for man to be alone; and if it was so with regard to a Paradise, how much more with regard to a wilderness! Half the pleasure of solitude, it has been remarked, arises from our having a friend at hand to whom we can say, How delightful this retirement is! Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel. Why, but to encourage social devotion, did our Saviour say to his disciples, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Why did he send forth the seventy, two by two,

in their mission through Judea, but to comfort each other in distress; to confer with each other in cases of perplexity; to stimulate each other in cases of languor; to check each other in cases of temptation. "Two are better far than one; because they have good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."

Let none despond. As all are required to be useful, so all may be serviceable, if they will: and often, far beyond the probability of their condition, or their own hopefulness; for humility makes a good man modest in his expectations, as well as in his pretensions.

We also see here, that confidence in God is not to lead us to disregard any advantages we can derive from ordinary resources. Moses had the engagement of God, and was even under a miraculous guidance; yet he does not overlook the assistance he could derive from his father-in-law, as to his advice in difficulties; and those instructions, which, from his knowledge of the Wilderness, he could give him, with regard to particular situations, and their conveniences or inconveniences. The religion of the Bible is always a reasonable service. It does not keep a man's eyes upon the stars, while he falls over every stumbling-block in his way: but says to him, "Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee: ponder the path of thy feet, that thy goings may be established." It places our dependence upon God; but that reliance is favourable to activity—is the spring of it. In Him we live, move, and have our being; but this does not supersede eating and drinking. He teaches us; but we are to read and hear his word. He promises; but he will be enquired of for the performance. And none of the aids he affords us render needless the exercise of prudence, the exertion of our faculties, the

offices of friendship, or the means of grace. "Draw nigh to God; and he will draw nigh to you."

FEB. 13.—"*Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sin.*" Ps. xxv. 16—18.

SURELY this book is addressed to the heart; and requires sensibility rather than talent to understand and explain it. How tender here is the language of David. And how instructive too. He was a sufferer, though a king, and a man eminently godly. And his sorrows were not superficial, but deep and depressing—"the sorrows of the heart." And while hoping for their diminution, they were "enlarged."

— But he is a petitioner, as well as a sufferer; and those sorrows will never injure us that bring us to God. Three things he prays for.

First. Deliverance. This we are allowed to desire, consistently with resignation to the divine will. But we must seek it, not from creatures, but from God, who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." Nothing is too hard for Him—He can turn the shadow of death into the morning—Therefore, says David, "O bring thou me out of my distresses."

Secondly. Notice. A kind look from God is desirable at any time, in any circumstances; but in affliction and pain, it is like life from the dead. Nothing cuts like the neglect of a friend in distress; nothing soothes like his calls, and enquiries, and sympathy, and tears, then.—But to say, Thou, God, seest me; thou knowest all my walking through this great wilderness—to be assured that he is atten-

tive to my condition, and is smiling through the cloud; fills the heart, even in tribulation, with a peace that passeth all understanding—Therefore, says David, "Look upon mine affliction and pain."

Thirdly. Pardon. He does not think himself sinless; and trials are apt to revive a sense of guilt, and to make the sufferer fearful; and to induce the prayer, "Do not condemn me." We will also venture to say, that however a Christian may feel his sorrows, he will feel his sins much more: these, these are the burden and the grief—Therefore, David says, "Forgive all my sins."

This was his meaning; and I hope I can make it my own.—If it be thy pleasure, release me from my complaint.—If not, and the distress is continued, to try me, be near to afford me a sensible manifestation of thy favour; let me see thy countenance; let me hear thy voice, saying, "I remember thee still."—Or, if this be denied, and I have no claim upon thee for such an indulgence, let me, for the Redeemer's sake, be absolved and justified. Remove my guilt, whatever becomes of my grief—grief *then*, cannot be penal—cannot be injurious—

"If sin be pardon'd, I'm secure;
"*Death* hath no sting beside:
"The law gives sin its damning power;
"But Christ, my ransom, died."

FEB. 14.—"*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" John xv. 14.

HE does not say, ye are the subjects of my love; but, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." You may love an animal, a slave, an enemy—but neither of these can be your friend; for friendship implies and requires what their con-

dition does not admit. It is a remarkable expression that Moses employs, when he says, "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy FRIEND who is as thine OWN SOUL." It seems to place a friend above all the relations of kindred, and Solomon does not scruple to say, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Friendship has always been deemed essential to the happiness of human beings, and indeed to their very honour: for it would be thought as disgraceful as it is disconsolate to have no friend. No peculiarity of condition, nor elevation of rank, sets a man above the attraction and utility of friendship. Kings have laid aside their royalties to indulge in it; and Alexander would have found a conquered world a kind of desert, without an Ephestion.

It is needless to enlarge on the excellency and value of this blessing. Who is not ready to acknowledge that friendship is the delight of youth; the pillar of age; the bloom of prosperity; the charm of solitude; the solace of adversity; the best benefactor and comforter in this vale of tears. But the question is, where a friend is to be found? It will be allowed that many who wear the name are unworthy of the title; and that even those who are sincere in their professions, may be chargeable with infirmities. Yet even human friendship is not a utopian good. He who says, all men are liars, says it in his haste, or from a heart that judges of others by itself. They who complain most are commonly the most to be complained of—for there is *real* friendship to be found on earth. But there is better in heaven—and in our text we have the advantage in the highest of all examples. In others, we may have the reality, and even the eminency of friendship, but in Him we have the perfection, the divinity of it.

But what is necessary to our claiming it? Ye

my friends, says he, "if ye do whatsoever I mmand you." By this he shews us, that though is the friend, he is also the lawgiver. Under atever character he reveals himself, we are never lose sight of the Sovereign. His goodness is to play his greatness, not to weaken it. He is the ince, as well as the Saviour—He "commands" his ends. And nothing less than obedience to his ll is required of us. It is not enough to read it, d hear it, and know it, and talk of it, and profess —we must "*do*" it. And our obedience must be partial; we must do "whatsoever" he commands . Obedience may be sincere, without being per- t in the degree; but it cannot be sincere, without ing universal in its principle and disposition. r if I do some things which he enjoins me, and t others, it follows that what I do, I do from some her motive than his authority—for this would lead e to observe all he enjoins. True obedience will t suffer me to select, any more than to dictate— only enquiry is, "Lord, *what* wilt thou have me do?" He who commands me to enter his gates th thanksgiving, tells me also to enter my closet. e who forbids me to steal, tells me to speak evil no man. Can I say, with David, "I esteem *all* y commandments concerning all things to be ght, and I hate *every* false way?"

With regard to the connexion, however, between is friendship and this obedience, let it not be sup- sed that it is a meritorious one—as if the practice served the privilege. This is impossible, and uld subvert the Gospel of Christ. Yet it is a rtain connexion; and as certain both in its exclu- n and inclusion as the nature of things and the rd of truth can make it.—And it is an encou- ging connexion. Had the requisition turned on rldly honour, or wealth, or genius, or science, any must have despaired. But the essential is t derived from condition, but conduct. It is

therefore within the reach of the poor, as well as of the rich; and of the illiterate, as well as the learned. All may be great in the sight of the Lord; and he is the greatest, whatever be his circumstances in life, who best obeys his Lord and Saviour. Mary was blessed in being his mother; but this was a privilege necessarily confined to one individual: He, therefore, when he heard the exclamation of the woman, Blessed be the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked! instantly mentions a way to a higher privilege, and which lies open to every one—"Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

Pray, therefore, "O that my feet were directed to keep thy precepts!" "Many will entreat the favour of the prince, and every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts." But when you seek the regards of the great, what base compliances are often necessary to please them—and then you are never sure of succeeding—and when you succeed—what have you gained? But His work is honourable and glorious. If you seek, you are sure to find. And whoso findeth Him, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. However unobserved or neglected among men you may be, no one can pass your door, and say, "There dwells a friendless person."

Lord Brooks was so charmed with that rare and accomplished personage, Sir Philip Sidney, that he would have no other inscription on his tomb, than this—"Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney."

Ah! says the Christian, I envy not those whose sepulchre will be adorned with the trophies of war, the pride of heraldry, or the renown of science—if my humble grave can tell, and tell truly—"Here lies the friend of Christ."

FEB. 15.—"*And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he*

which sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."
Acts iii. 9, 10.

His walking was a proof of the reality and perfection of the cure. His praising God was the proper improvement of it.

But what an attestation was here, to the Divine mission of the Apostles, and so to the truth of Christianity itself! We *speak*, said they, in His Name who was crucified—and if you ask for a proof of it, we will *act* in His Name. Bring forth your dumb, and we will give them speech; your blind, and we will open their eyes; your sick, and we will heal them; your lame, and we will make them leap as an hart. This was evidence adapted to persons of every rank and capacity. It required no laboured process of reasoning and eloquence. It was the broad seal of Heaven, which all could see and understand.

And there was nothing like artifice or collusion in these miracles. Take the case before us. The patient resided, not in a remote place, but in Jerusalem; that is, in the midst of the enemies of the Apostles. He had been lame from his mother's womb: and was now upwards of forty years old. He was well known; he was a beggar. Multitudes had seen him; many had relieved him; and many had handled him—for he was carried daily to the place of begging. And this was not an obscure corner, but the entrance into the Temple. And the thing was not done in the night, but at nine o'clock in the morning, when there was a concourse of people.

Put all this together; and then ask whether any thing could have been fairer. Could any thing have been more open to detection, had there been any imposture? Compare such an achievement with

the prodigies of Heathenism; and the miracles of the Romish Church.

And see, also, what can equal the *credulity* of unbelievers! What is the faith of a Christian, to *their* belief? Christians believe difficulties, because they are abundantly confirmed; but *they* swallow improbabilities, and impossibilities. Their rejection of the Gospel cannot arise from an intellectual, but a moral cause. They do not want evidence, but disposition—they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore, how can they escape, if they neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto them by those that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Need I tremble for the cause of Christianity? Need my reason be ashamed of my faith?

"Hence, and for ever, from my heart,
"I bid my doubts and fears depart;
"And to those hands my soul resign,
"That bear credentials so divine."

FEB. 16.—*They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*" Dan iii. 12.

THE refusal of these three young men was as trying as it was noble. The resolution has immortalized them. Let us observe how much they had to overcome in adhering to it.

They could plead *authority*. Here was the command of their sovereign; and good men are to be good subjects; to honour principalities and powers; to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work. But there is a difference between civil

and spiritual claims. We are, indeed, to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; but we must also render unto God the things that are God's. If any being requires us to do what is opposed to the revealed will of God, we are prevented by an authority from which there can lie no appeal; and we ought to obey God rather than man. Thus the midwives did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive: "And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses."

This conscientiousness, however, has often given the conduct of God's servants an appearance of insubordination and revolt; and their enemies have not failed to seize it, and turn it to their discredit. Jesus was not Cæsar's friend; and stirred up the people. The Apostles turned the world upside down. And, doubtless, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were censured and vilified for their disloyalty.

They could plead *obligation*. Nebuchadnezzar was not only their sovereign, but their friend and benefactor. He had educated them in a princely manner, and advanced them to the most honourable charges. And nothing tries like tenderness. Benefits attract and attach the heart; and good men are the most susceptible of grateful impressions. One of the most painful things in the world, to an ingenuous mind, is to refuse the wishes of one who has done much for him; for there is nothing in which he would more delight, were he not restrained by principle. Suppose a dutiful child. He loves and honours his parents; and he ought to honour them. These parents, in other respects, are kind and good—but they are worldly, and require him to go into the dissipations of life; they are irreligious, and forbid him to attend, what, according to his conviction, is the truth of God—and, instead of threatening, they weep over him, and beseech him, by every tender motive, not to break their hearts, nor

bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now to loosen from such embraces and entreaties; and act a part that *looks* like disrespect—at the hearing of a voice that cries, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me:" here is a trial hardly supportable. And much of this, these young men would feel, at the thought of the favours which had been heaped upon them.

They could plead *universality of compliance.* All besides obey; and why should they stand alone, and affect to be better than any one else? How often is this objection thrown out! Singularity, for its own sake, argues a little and a vain mind: vain, because it seeks notice; and little, because it can attain it in no better way. In things harmless and indifferent, we may lawfully conform to the usages of the day and place wherein we live; but where truth, and duty, and conscience are concerned, we must be stedfast and immovable; though deserted, opposed, ridiculed by all: and by unsought, but indispensable singularity, evince the purity of our motives, and the dignity of our principles. So did Abdiel.

> "..... Faithful found
> "Among the faithless, faithful only he
> "Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
> "Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;
> "His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.
> "Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
> "To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
> "Though single."

So did Joshua, and Caleb, and Lot, and Noah. And all Christians are required not to be conformed to the world. And Jesus died to redeem and purify unto himself a peculiar people—and peculiar they must be while the multitude do evil.—Well, said these sufferers, if all yield, we must not—will not—whatever be the consequence.

And they could plead the *dreadfulness of the penalty.* We are often ready to justify or excuse

our conduct by the pressure of circumstances; and to allege, that the trial is too great for our virtue. And what is the trial? What are our difficulties and perils in the path of duty? If we follow such a course—Well, shall we be bound to the stake? or thrown into a lion's den? or a fiery furnace? No. Shall we then be deprived of our liberty? and confined in a prison? or be stripped of our property, and reduced to beggary? No such thing—Blessed be the laws of this happy land. Behold our jeopardies and sacrifices! We may lose a trifle of our profit by not selling or working on the Sabbath. We may have less to hoard by giving alms to the needy. If we follow our convictions, we may lose the smile of a friend; or incur the sneer of a fool. By the redeeming our time, we may even be constrained to leave the bed of sloth a little earlier in the morning.

These are our tribulations because of the Word! These are the martyrs of our day! Ye professors of religion, who can exercise no self-denial, who can take up no cross; "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" Look at these youths! What had they to lose! What to suffer! A fiery furnace—before their eyes—into which they were to be instantly thrown!

FEB. 17.—"*Rejoice the soul of thy servant.*"
Ps. lxxxvi. 6.

THE Queen of Sheba not only admired Solomon, but hailed his attendants. "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants that stand continually before thee." What then is it to be a servant of the King of kings and Lord of lords!

A servant of God, however, is not one that only subserves his designs. This, by an overruling Providence, all do, even the wicked themselves. But one, who, from conviction and disposition, resigns himself to his will, and holds himself at his disposal, always asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" always praying, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

And can such a man as this want spiritual joy? Yes. Even David himself, that eminent servant of God, does; and therefore prays, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant." We ask, if I am his, why am I thus? We think our course of experience singular; but while we complain, we are passing by the very landmarks which those who have gone before us have set up to tell us that we are right. Our state is one thing, our joy is another: the former remains always the same, the latter often varies. Our safety does not depend upon our knowledge; but our comfort is much affected by it; and sometimes a servant of God has but very imperfect views of those glorious truths which make us "free indeed." Sometimes he may be depressed by his bodily frame and infirmities. Sometimes, too, he is under Divine rebuke for sin—for this it is that separates between God and the soul. We should therefore search and try our ways. Is there not a cause? If the consolations of God are small with us, is there no secret thing with us? Is there no worm at the root of our withering gourd? No Achan in the camp, the troubler of Israel? Joab besieges Abel, and threatens to destroy it. A woman cries out to him to know the cause. He answers, there is one Sheba, the son of Bichri, a traitor to the king. Cast him over the wall, and I will withdraw. And so it was. And thus, if we would have peace with God, we must sacrifice every usurper, saying,

"The dearest idol I have known,
"Whate'er that idol be;
"Help me to tear it from thy throne,
"And worship only Thee."

— But a servant of God will value what he may want. He prizes it, not only because God has commanded and promised it; but because he knows, from experience, that the joy of the Lord is his strength. He has seen how it emboldened his profession, and enlivened his zeal, and weaned his heart from the world, and revived him in the midst of trouble. He has tasted its sweetness—this he can never lose the relish of; and this excites him to pray, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

For he is sure that God is alone the source and giver of it, and therefore to *Him* he goes—"Rejoice the soul of thy servant." It is very desirable to see the morning after a dark night; and the spring, after a cold barren winter. But what makes the morning, and the spring? Not all the lamps or fires in the world; but the sun. And the Lord God is the sun, as well as the shield of his people. All our light, and heat, and bloom, are from Him: and in him is our fruit found. He is the God, not only of all grace, but of all comfort.

It is He that comforts us in any of our common mercies; otherwise our sleep would not refresh us, nor our food nourish us, nor our friends cheer us. And what would the means of grace be, if he was not in them? God, says the Apostle, comforted us by the coming of Titus—not Titus, but God *by* Titus. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers *by* whom ye believed, even as *God* gave to every man? Luther says, it is as easy to make a world, as to ease a troubled conscience.—But

"The troubled conscience knows Thy voice;
"Thy cheering words awake our joys:
"Thy words allay the stormy wind,
"And calm the surges of the mind."

FEB. 18.—"*Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.*" Rom. i. 10, 11.

AT this time Paul had not seen Rome. But how natural was it in a man of his taste and intelligence to wish to see it! Nothing had made such a figure in history, as this imperial city. From a kind of village, it extended in a course of years till it had become the mistress of the nations, and the metropolis of the world. How powerfully must curiosity have been awakened—by its extent, its majesty, its edifices, its institutions, laws, and customs! Paul was also a citizen; and while some, with a great ransom, purchased this privilege, he was free-born. Yet his longing to see it, was not to indulge the man and the Roman, but the Christian and the Apostle—He longed to impart to the beloved and called of God there "some spiritual benefit."

But see the order of divine grace. Before he was useful to them, *they* imparted some spiritual benefit to him, and established his wavering confidence. For when he had landed at Puteoli, and advanced towards Rome, the brethren came to meet him as far as the Appii Forum and the Three Taverns: "whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage." Here we see, that the most eminent servants of God may be depressed and despondings; and that it is possible for them to derive assistance and comfort from those who are much inferior to them in office, condition, abilities, and grace. There is no such thing as independence. Let none be proud. Let none despair. The Christian church is a body; and the body is not one member, but many. "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no

need of thee: nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

But how was this prosperous journey, according to the will of God, for which he made so many requests, accomplished? How little did he imagine the way in which he was to visit this famous city—He enters it, indeed—but in the character of a prisoner, driven thither by persecution; and after being shipwrecked upon a certain island! So high are God's thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways! So little do we know what we pray for! So often by strange, and sometimes by terrible things in righteousness, does he answer us as the God of our salvation! So fulfils He the promise—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight—These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

FEB. 19.—"*And when he thought thereon, he wept.*" Mark xiv. 72.

DODDRIDGE supposes that this is intended to express, not only the immediate sensibility of Peter, but his feeling through life; and that he always wept at the thought of his vile and ungrateful conduct. His sin was certainly very aggravated; and, with all his failings, he was a man of very tender affections, and great ingenuousness.

But sorrow arising from such a source is not peculiar to our Apostle. All the people of God should feel a penitent disposition at the review of their sin.

And who, when they look back, can be at a loss for materials of self-accusation and contrition? There are the sins of our unregenerate condition. There are the sins we have been capable of, since we have

been called to the knowledge of the truth. All these we are to judge of, not by their grossness, but by their guilt. In the number of our sins, we are to rank our omissions of duty; our non-improvement of our time and talents; the defectiveness of our aims and motives; and the departures of our heart in love and confidence, from the blessed God.

Some would prevent the effect of such self-inspections, by the notion, that there is no evil in the sins of God's people. But their sins are worse than those of others, by reason of the nearer relations in which, and the greater obligations under which, they are committed. They have also, in sinning, greater difficulties to overcome. They have not only to sin against greater love, but greater light: and they have been convinced of the evil and bitterness of sin; and have had a wounded spirit which they could not bear. Their sins, also, are more injurious with regard to others: distressing the strong; stumbling the weak; confirming the prejudiced; hardening the wicked; causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and the way of truth to be evil spoken of. And is all this nothing? Micah did not think so. Who, says he, is a God like unto him, who passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?

But suppose the Christian is led to see, that his standing is secure; and that God is pacified towards him. Will he weep then? Yes; he will weep the more. The goodness of God will lead him to repentance; and he will sorrow after a godly sort—like a dying saint, who being asked why he so wept? answered, I weep—not that my sins may be pardoned, but because I hope they are pardoned.

Let us, then, never be ashamed or afraid of such tears as Peter shed. Nothing is so becoming and reasonable. Other grief may be excused; but this can be justified. Other sorrow may render us amiable in the eyes of our fellow-creatures; but this is extolled of God: "The sacrifices of God are a

broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, *thou* wilt not despise." This brings us within the reach of the promises—"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy;" "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." It is not easy, or perhaps possible, to make others comprehend this—but there is a pleasure even in the frame itself; and they who are the subjects of it well know, that their happiest moments are their most tender; and, with Augustine, they can bless God for "the grace of tears." Here is a proof of our being under the renewing of the Holy Ghost. If the heart of stone was not taken away, how could I feel and grieve? And if there was nothing in me but nature, how could I feel and grieve for sin? There is nothing more useful in the divine life than this disposition. It endears the Saviour, and his atonement, and his righteousness, and intercession, and his grace. It makes me cautious and circumspect: in this temper of mind I cannot expose myself to temptation, or trifle with sin: but be always watchful and prayerful. Blessed is the man that feareth always.

"'Tis joy enough, my all in all,
"At thy dear feet to lie:
"Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
"And none can higher fly."

FEB. 20.—"*Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*" Mal. iv. 2.

THEY were before in *darkness* and *disease;* both of which *confine.* But the Sun of Righteousness arises, and with healing under his wings: and thus, the true light now shining, and health being restored, they become free and active—They go forth and—grow up as calves of the stall.

For even now they have not attained, they are not already perfect. Nor are they to remain what they are, but to increase with all the increase of God. Some tell us, there is no growth in grace—as if Christians could not be more wise, more humble, more patient, more zealous, than they are—as if Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians was a falsehood, when he told them, that their faith grew exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them towards each other abounded—as if Peter enjoined an absurdity, when he admonished Christians to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour—as if God himself mocked or trifled when he said, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger!"

We are not to deny what God has done for our souls; yea, we ought to be thankful, if we have only light enough to see our darkness, and feeling enough to be sensible of our hardness.

"Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
"Yet since I *feel* it so,
"It yields some hope of life divine
"Within, however low."

But though we must not despise the day of small things, we are not to be satisfied with it. A day of greater things is attainable; and if we do not aspire after it, we have reason to suspect even the reality of our religion. Spiritual principles may be weak, but if they are divine, they will evince it by a tendency to growth.

The sacred writers express this progression by every kind of growth.—By human—we read of babes, little children, young men, and those of full age, who have their senses exercised, by reason of use, to discern both good and evil.—By vegetable growth—Thus we read, first the blade, then the ear, and *after that* the full corn in the ear; they shall spring

among the grass, as willows by the water-courses; ey shall grow as the lily, they shall grow as the ne.—Here we have animal growth.—They shall grow as calves of the stall. No creatures, perhaps, increase so rapidly and observably as these, especially hen, as here, they are well attended and fed, and for e very purpose of growth.

We have sometimes been reminded of the truth this image, by the spiritual reality. We have seen ose, who, in a little time, have surprised all around hem, by their progress in the divine life. So clear nd full have been their views of the things of God. o established have their hearts been with grace. o simply and entirely have they depended upon the aviour. So decided have they been in their sepaation from the spirit of the world; and yet, so conerned to be useful in it. So spiritual have they been n their conversation: and yet so free from all religious grimace and affectation. So ready have they een to do good and communicate, in the cause of he poor, and the cause of Christ. Such a living acrifice have they presented in their bodies and pirits. So have they adorned the doctrine of God ur Saviour in all things.

But, alas! as to many of us, we have reason to xclaim, "My leanness, my leanness!" How little rogress have we made in religious knowledge, xperience, practice, and usefulness, though we have ossessed every advantage, and long enjoyed the eans of grace. After all the discipline of his family, he instructions of his word, the ordinances of his ouse, how dull are our ears of hearing; how slow of eart are we to believe; how much do our souls leave unto the dust; how affected are we with the hings of time and sense; and how little actuated are e by the powers of a world to come! At present, he comparison reproves us.

—But let it also excite and encourage. It not nly reminds us of our duty, but of our privilege.

This growth is not only commanded, but promised—It is therefore attainable—and we know the way to our resources. Jesus came, not only that we might have life, but have it more abundantly. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

FEB. 21.—"*And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.*" Numb. xxi. 4.

THE people of God are held forth under various characters in the Scriptures: and no one of them at all, is more common, more just, more pleasing, more instructive, than the image of strangers and pilgrims upon earth. And who knows not what a beautiful use Bunyan has made of it—

"Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale
"Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail.
"——— whose PILGRIM marks the road,
"And guides the PROGRESS of the soul to God."

But what is there in the way to discourage the souls of the travellers heaven-ward? Much. Sometimes they are affected by the length of the way. For hope deferred maketh the heart sick. This was the case with Israel at this time: for instead of passing through the land of Edom, they had to fetch a compass all around the borders; and all this in a wilderness too, and under a burning sky. If a traveller, after supposing he was near his journey's end, was to learn that it was yet many miles off—all worn and weary, his heart would be ready to

faint; and utter the cry of despondence, "Oh, I shall never reach it!" What Isaiah says, "They shall behold the land that is very far off," may be applied to the experience of Christians with regard to heaven. It is often remote in fact: that is, it is frequently long before they arrive there. For they are not removed hence, as soon as they are converted: but detained here to be made meet for their destination, and to honour their Redeemer, and to serve their generation. Hence many of them are longer on earth after they are called by grace, than the Jews wandered in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. But we refer to the slowness of their progress, the smallness of their attainments, and the nature of their apprehensions. "Once," says the soul, "I was ready to seize the blessing; but now it seems to recede as I advance; yea, the distance between me and the attainment seems to increase daily." "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning"—"O when will it dawn—When wilt Thou come unto me?"

Sometimes they are discouraged because of the way, owing to the enemies that infest it. In the re-building of the second temple, we are told, that every man with one hand wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon—this was sore labour. But the Christian's life is a warfare, as well as a pilgrimage: he moves on, bearing his sword, as well as his staff—now to walk and fight too—and to contend every step of the way—and with adversaries possessing every thing to render them formidable—and as soon as one is vanquished, to see another rising up—this is arduous and trying. And what wonder, if, when without are fightings, within are

Then the way shews many that are turning back in it: and this is often discouraging. We had heard of their setting off. Some of them had passed us near enough to be observed. They soon left us, seeming to surpass us, not only in gifts, but grace —and we not only hailed, but envied them. How wonderful and grievous to see them returning, vicious, or infidel, or lovers of this present world. We instantly remember, and apply to *them* the awful declaration, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." But who can help thinking of *himself?* And what I am I? And may not I also prove a cast-away?

Besides, these revolters never come back silent. They solicit us to return too. They assure us the way is impassable. They have tried it; and hope their experience will make us wise. Once they thought certain notions to be erroneous; and certain indulgences to be sinful; but they are more enlightened and liberal now. Such persons, too, never subside into neutrals. From friends, they necessarily become enemies. They persecute, if it lie in their power. They always reproach and vilify—even in their own defence, defaming the party and the cause—to justify their secession from them.

It is often discouraging, also, to find the way so narrow—"Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life." The difficulty, therefore, of getting on, is great. A way is made narrow by the near approximation of the sides, whether walls, ditches, or hedges; so that we have to press through; and can hardly do it without some injury on the right hand or on the left. In the exercise of every grace, and the performance of every duty, a Christian has to keep between two extremes. As to the use of the means of grace, he must neither neglect them nor idolize them. As to connections and relations in life, he may sin, by not loving them enough; or by loving them too *much*. Courage lies between rashness and fear;

and frugality, between profusion and niggardliness; and confidence, between presumption and despondency; and patience, between despising the chastening of the Lord, and fainting when we are rebuked of him. And is it easy always to go, not only in the way of righteousness, but in the *midst* of the paths of judgment?

So far generally of the road. But there are particular parts that are peculiarly trying—Such as the Slough of Despond—the Valley of Humiliation—the Hill Difficulty with the lions—and the deep cold River to be waded through, before the Shining City can be entered. A Christian knows what all this means; and sometimes finds it hard to believe that the way to glory lies through it all.

Am I then setting out for the heavenly world? Let me not prepare myself for surprise and disappointment, by expecting that every thing will be smooth, and flowery, and delightful. I cannot, indeed, look for too much from the promises of God—they are so exceeding great and precious: but I must look for it in God's own order. I must deny myself, and take up my cross: and not be slothful; but be a follower of them, who through faith and patience have reached the prize of their high calling.

Have I professed, and hoped that I am a Christian? Let me not conclude, that I have no part nor lot in the matter, because my soul is sometimes cast down and disquieted within me. Have not those who have gone before me wept and groaned also? Are not the subjects of divine grace represented by their fear, as well as their confidence? by their sorrow, as well as their joy?

Yet let me endeavour to go on rejoicing. Let me remember, that there is much to encourage me, because of the way. An unerring guide—an almighty guard—companions—strength to hold on—refreshments along the road—and the end of it perfect rest, and peace, and glory, and joy.

"Our journey is a thorny maze,
"But we march upward still;
"Forget these troubles of the way,
"And reach at Zion's hill.

"See the kind angels at the gates
"Inviting us to come:
"There Jesus, the fore-runner, waits
"To welcome travellers home.

"There on a green and flowery mount
"Our weary souls shall sit,
"And with transporting joys recount
"The labours of our feet."

FEB. 22.—"*Ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water.*" Ex. xxiii. 25.

OUR chief concern should be to secure those blessings which will supply the soul, and endure for ever. He only is truly blessed who is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Our Saviour therefore says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"—yet he does not scruple to say, "And all *these* things shall be added unto you." Temporal benefits are not beneath the attention of our kind Father. He knoweth that we have need of these things before we ask him. He knoweth our frame; and he knoweth our fears. And not only under the Law, but under the Gospel, godliness is profitable unto all things; and has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

The promise before us extends to all the temporal support of his people: but there is wisdom in the language. In another place, it is also said, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Is not the specification designed to check not only anxiety, but ambition and avarice? Does it not say, "*Seekest thou* great things for thyself? Seek them

not." "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have."

Nothing can do us good without the blessing of God; but his blessing commands what it announces: and what He blesses, *is* blessed. Hence a *little* that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. It is more *efficient*. It goes further: as Philip Henry was wont to say to his family, "My dear children, the grace of God will make a little go a great way." It is surprising to see with what a slender income many Christians keep up a decent appearance, and owe no man any thing, and even give to him that needeth. The thing is, "The secret of the Lord is upon their tabernacle."—But while he blesses the habitation of the just, his curse is in the house of the wicked. And then nothing prospers; and they seem a wonder to themselves and others: they get much and gain nothing. So it was with the selfish and illiberal Jews when they came back from Babylon, and built their own ceiled houses, while the House of God lay waste. Had they minded His affairs, he would have minded theirs; and have proved that we cannot serve God for nought. But now, says God, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."

It is also more *satisfying*. For the state of the mind conduces to the relish of every outward comfort; and in the Christian this state of mind is grateful, and peaceful, and cheerful, arising from a hope of reconciliation with God. His frown would darken a thousand suns. But every thing smiles when He smiles.

> "How sweet our daily comforts prove,
> "When they are season'd with his love."

And we see the dear medium through which they come as covenant blessings:

"*He* sunk beneath our heavy woes,
"To raise us to his throne;
"There 's not a gift his hand bestows,
"But cost his heart a groan."

— The wicked feast without fear; but there is reason enough why they *should* fear. Neglecting His service, they are strangers to his blessing. Left to themselves, every advantage and indulgence operating upon their depravity, contributes to their guilt and misery. Their table becomes a snare before them; and that which should have proved for their welfare, becomes a trap. The prosperity of fools destroys them. Now consider this, ye that forget God—and without delay, seek to be numbered with the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

FEB. 23.—"*Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*"
James v. 20.

AND can *we* convert the sinner from the error of his way? Yes—or the language would be futile. But *how* can we do this? Not meritoriously—this would invade the office and glory of the Lord Jesus: for He only delivers us from the wrath to come: He only saves his people from their sins. Not efficiently—this would invade the work and honour of the Holy Spirit: for we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. There is therefore only one way in which *we* can convert a sinner; and that is instrumentally. But this does not detract from divine agency: there is no inconsistency between agency and instrumentality. A pen is nothing without a hand to use it. An instrument always supposes and requires an agent.

But is the converse of this proposition true? Does an agent always require an instrument? It is so with us; but not with a Being whose will is efficiency; and who said, Let there be light, and there was light. Yet what God is not compelled to do from weakness, he chooses to do from wisdom. He therefore works by means. We know of nothing that he does immediately. He fans us by the breeze, and warms us by the sun, and refreshes us by sleep, and sustains us by food. And as it is in nature, so it is in grace. Among the Corinthians God gave the increase, but Paul planted and Apollos watered. Their faith came not *from* them; but Paul and Apollos were ministers *by* whom they believed. We mean not, however, by this reference, to confine this work to ministers. James alluded not only or chiefly to them; but to Christians at large. All may be useful here; and in a thousand ways exert themselves to accomplish this blessed and glorious design.

For he who effects it is the greatest of all benefactors—for "He saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins!" And what is every other achievement compared with this? Nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. So will all those judge who walk by faith; and believe the testimony of God concerning—The value of a soul! The dreadfulness of eternal death! And the absolute necessity of forgiveness, in order to the man's escape from the damnation of hell!

The work, therefore, is its own reward. Spurious beneficence always wishes to excite notice; and the man, in some way or other, aims (or he will do nothing) to make it conducive to his own interest. But true charity seeketh not its own, but the welfare of the object; and if *that* end be answered, the benefactor is satisfied. James knew this; and mentions nothing else, by way of motive—but the thing itself. He does not tell his brethren, that if

they convert a sinner they shall be applauded here, or recompensed at the resurrection of the just—It is true that they *will* derive honour and advantage from their usefulness. They that water, shall be watered also. The sinners they save will pray for them; and, if they die first, when they fail, will receive them into everlasting habitations; and in the day of the Lord Jesus they will be their joy and crown. But this is the effect, and not the principle, of their zeal. It is enough if they succeed—enough if they can save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

And the prospect of success in such a case, however limited, should be sufficient to animate. Some may be privileged to bless numbers. But James speaks of "the sinner," and "a soul." This agrees with the language of our Lord, who tells us, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over *one* sinner that repenteth." This brings the encouragement home to all. All cannot be Luthers, to reform countries; or Whitfields, to preach to thousands; or Careys, to translate the Scriptures into other tongues. But can we do nothing? Surely some one soul is thrown in our way to whom we may be useful—a child—a servant—a relative—a neighbour.

James would have us *think* of this; and think *much* of it. "Let him *know*, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." And who does not know this? Yea, were we to judge from their practice, we should be ready to ask, Who does know it? What is the knowledge that answers no end? It is not enough to believe—we must remember, and reflect: we must follow out our convictions. This fine sentiment must be present to the mind—at all times—and in all conditions—when we are alone and when we are in company—when we pray and when we speak—when

sit in our house—and when we walk by the way
nd when we lie down—and when we rise up—
must bind it as a sign upon our hand—and wear
s a frontlet between our eyes—and write it upon
posts of our door and upon our gates. "Let
know, that he which converteth a sinner from
error of his way shall save a soul from death,
shall hide a multitude of sins."

Feb. 24.—"*They shall be as the stones of a crown,
ed up as an ensign upon his land.*" Zech. ix. 16.

re we see the dignity of the Lord's people. They
"stones," precious stones, set in the "crown" of
King of kings. For such is the infinite goodness
God, that he not only spares, but pardons and
ifies. In his righteousness they are exalted.
y are not only saved, but ennobled. With
gs are they upon the throne. They are naturally
a low estate, and are viler than the earth; but
raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up
beggar from the dunghill. And though the world
oweth them not, and they are little and low in
ir own eyes, and it doth not yet appear what they
ll be; yet now are they the sons of God; and
se they have been precious in his sight, they
e been honourable, and he has loved them, and
s them his jewels, and a peculiar treasure unto
. And all those who in his light see light, view
m in the same way. They remember the time
en they began to honour them that fear the Lord;
en they took hold of the skirt of him that is a
r; and prayed to see the good of his chosen. Then
y seemed to regard them as more than human
ngs; and while, above all things, they desired
mmunion with them, they felt unworthy of their

presence and notice. And though, since then, they have found that they are not already perfect, yet they know they are the excellent of the earth, and that they are more excellent than their neighbours. There is often more real virtue in their failings, than in the very devotions of others: and "the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim is better than the vintage of Abiezer."

Here is also their exhibition—these stones of a crown are "lifted up." They are not to be concealed. Our Saviour compares them to a city set, not in a valley, but on a hill, which cannot be hid; and to a candle, placed, not under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. And when he calls them by his grace, he says to the "prisoners, Go forth; and to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves: they shall feed in the *ways*, and their pasture shall be on all *high* places." Christians need not be concealed—every thing in their religion will bear examination, and challenges the eyes of all, whether infidels, or philosophers, or politicians, or moralists. They ought not to be concealed—every thing in their religion is adapted to do good; but for this purpose it must be known. They cannot be concealed—their principles must operate; the sun cannot shine without shewing itself.

Here is also their utility—these stones of a crown are to be lifted up "as an ensign upon his land." An oriflamme suspended over the royal tent; and designed to attract and aggregate followers to the cause in which he is engaged. Thus the Saviour himself is spoken of: "In that day there shall be a root in Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." But what Christ is, Christians are—subordinately, indeed, yet really. Hence their calling, to hold forth the word of life. They are placed and displayed, to reprove, and convince,

and excite and encourage others, to seek and serve God. They are witnesses for him. They are trophies of the power, and greatness, and riches of his grace. They proclaim what he is able and willing to do: and, saved by him, they are all employed for him. "Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off."

FEB. 25.—"*Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.*" Rom. xvi. 15.

ADMITTING that the Bible be the word of God, we might have inferred, from his wisdom and goodness, that no part of it can be useless: but we are expressly assured, that "All Scripture *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Therefore this long postcript, this catalogue of particular salutations, has its uses. It certainly shews us the principle that actuated the first Christians—all men were to know that they were the disciples of Christ, by their loving one another.—It shews, also, how mistaken they are who think the New Testament does not sanction private friendship.—It also proves how impossible it was to forge this Epistle; abounding as it does with so many specific allusions: for these not only render detection possible, but easy. Hence Paley much avails himself of this chapter in his Horæ Paulinæ —a work of uncommon excellence; and which deals only in the argument derivable from *incidental* evidence.

— Neither is it improper to observe from it, the error of Popery. Papists say that Peter was the bishop of Rome; but had he been there, is it credible

for a moment that *he* would have been overlooked by our Apostle? The probability indeed is, that he never was there. There is no evidence of it in the Scripture: and we know for what purposes of delusion it has been pretended—the Roman succession of bishops from him.

—But who can help observing how many females are mentioned here? Phebe. Priscilla. Mary. Junia. Tryphena. Tryphosa. Persis. The mother of Rufus. Julia. The sister of Nereus.—All these, with the exception of two, are not only mentioned, but commended: and these two would not have been saluted by name, unless they had been persons of religious excellence; for Paul valued no other qualities compared with this. But all the rest of these worthies have ascribed to them some attainment or service, "in the Lord."

Let not, therefore, females suppose that they are cut off from usefulness, and usefulness—even in the cause of Christ. The most eminent servants of God have acknowledged their obligations to them; and ascribed no little of their success to their care and kindness. The public ministry is not indeed open to them—neither is the army or navy, or the senate: and good sense will acquiesce in the distinctions and determinations of Heaven, especially when it is seen, that they are not founded on any principle of degradation, but in the obvious proprieties of life. If they have not authority, they have influence, which is far better, and more deeply effective. Servants have blessed God for pious mistresses. Children have been prepared for the preaching of the Word, and the devotion of the Sanctuary, by the earlier, but important efforts of a mother. How much does even the religious public owe to a Mrs. Newton, a Mrs. Cecil: and a thousand more; from whom the churches have derived such able ministers! To Hannah we owe a Samuel: and to Lois and Eunice, *his* mother and grandmother, we owe a Timothy.

They are at home in almsdeeds, like Dorcas, who made garments for the poor: and are peculiarly adapted to visit the sick and the afflicted. The wife may win the irreligious husband without the word: and fan his devotion, and give speed to his zeal, when he is in the way everlasting. Who would keep them from those public meetings where feelings are to be excited, which they will be sure to carry away, and improve at home? In a word, women have the finest heads, and hearts, and tongues, and hands, for usefulness, in the world. Who does not wish to see them always under a religious principle? Who would not have them *appropriately* more encouraged and employed as workers together with the servants of Christ? "Help," therefore, says the Apostle, "those women that laboured with me in the Gospel, whose names are in the book of life."

FEB. 26.—"*When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*" Luke xix. 41.

AN ordinary mind would have been engrossed and elated, by the actions and acclamations of the multitude, who cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way; and spread their garments on the ground for him to ride upon; and filled the air with Hosannas, crying, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord! But he wept—wept at the sight of Jerusalem, whose visitation was now closing, and whose judgment was hastening on—saying, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes."

Surely these tears teach us, that there is nothing degrading in sensibility. Indeed, all true greatness is tender and sympathetic. Jonathan and David,

the heroes of the age, one of whom had slain a whole garrison, and the other killed Goliath, both wept, till each exceeded. Homer, that exquisite painter of Nature, considers Ulysses as excelling all men in wisdom, yet represents him as weeping three times in six lines. Achilles, too, so extraordinary in courage, he describes as weeping often and plentifully. Let not, therefore, the unfeeling pride themselves, as superior in fortitude and philosophy. Feeling is the noblest distinction and ornament of humanity: and in proportion as we lose it, we cease to be men. There is a moral ossification of the heart, as well as a physical; and the one is as pitiable as the other. He who was fairer than the children of men, was often known to weep.

As these tears were honourable, so they are exemplary. For whom did he shed them? The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who, after every kind of insult, were going to put him to death. At the grave of Lazarus he wept for friends; here, for adversaries. And does he not, by this, tell us to be tender-hearted? to weep with them that weep? That we should bewail the miseries of others? and not confine our compassion to our own connexions? but love our enemies, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that persecute us? And does he not enforce this, not only by precept, but example? And can we be his disciples, unless we follow him? "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk even as He walked!" "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

These tears are encouraging. Tears are generally considered proofs of concern. Human tears, indeed, it will be allowed, are not infallible tokens; but the tears of Christ may be safely trusted. They shew his compassion; the sincerity, the greatness of his compassion. They tell us, that his love passeth knowledge: and therefore they call upon us to

repair to him—assuring us, that he is not willing that any should perish; that as he lives, he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth—

"'Give me thine heart, my son,' he cries,
"And kindly waits to take thee in:
"With love and pity in his eyes,
"He weeps to save thee from thy sin."

Finally, they are awful and foreboding; admonishing us of the dreadfulness of their doom on whose behalf they are shed. It is affecting to see a man weep, and especially a great man. You would naturally suppose that something vast and momentous was necessary to move to tears such mighty minds as those of a Bacon or a Newton. And could a trifle move the Son of God to weep? And if the temporal calamities coming on the Jews affected him, how much more would their eternal perdition! What were the Roman eagles, compared with the wrath to come! O, these tears say, plain enough, "There is something divinely, infinitely pitiable in the loss of a soul! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Who knoweth the power of his anger!"

May we not fairly infer from hence, what his feeling is in the recovery of a sinner? If he weeps over those who are ready to perish, surely he will rejoice over those that are saved. "He will rejoice over them with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over them with singing."

FEB. 27.—"*Increasing in the knowledge of God.*" Col. i. 10.

DOES this mean the knowledge of which God is the author, or the knowledge of which he is the subject?

In reality, this is the same thing. The Gospel contains the knowledge which God has communicated to the children of men; and this principally discovers *himself;* so that it is at once a revelation *from* God, and a revelation *of* him. All his works, the largest and the least, praise him. If we take up the telescope, or the microscope, we alike exclaim, "This is the finger of God"—But we take up the Gospel, and say, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."—Here we look into his very heart, and see that it is the dwelling-place of pity—Here we know the thoughts he thinks towards us, and find that they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil.

With regard to this knowledge, we may make out four classes.

— Some are *destitute of this knowledge* of God. Some! There are at present more than five hundred millions lying in darkness, and the shadow of death! These have never heard of the Name of Jesus, and know not that there is such a Being in the universe. Yet Christians have it in their power to inform them: and a few are exerting themselves—Prosper, O God, their endeavours—that thy way may be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations.

— Some *reject it.* This is one of the things we should deem incredible; but we have undeniable, as well as mortifying evidence. How many refuse to hear! How many never read the Word of God! Others even sneer at its inspiration, and ridicule its contents! Whatever difficulties may attend the doom of the former class, justice admits of none with regard to this—"How can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

— Some *hold it in unrighteousness.* They profess to know God; but in works deny him. Some of these have clear views of the way of salvation, and even contend for the faith once delivered to

the saints. The Gospel has taught them every thing —except to deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow the Saviour in the regeneration. They would be offended to be placed near the former class. "We are not unbelievers." No—you have denied the faith, and are "worse than an Infidel."

— Some *receive it in the love and the influence of it.* Their faith is more than notion: their worship is not formality: their hope is not delusion—they live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Though these are still comparatively few, yet, blessed be God, their number is daily and greatly enlarging; and the Lord add to his people, how many soever they be, a hundred-fold.

Art thou, my reader, one of them? Remember four things.

First. That thou hast *any* of this knowledge—should make thee thankful.

Secondly. That thou hast *so little*—should make thee humble.

Thirdly. That more is *attainable*—should make thee hopeful.

Fourthly. That it is attainable only in *the use of means*—should make thee diligent.

Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

FEB. 28.—"*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*" John xiii. 1.

THESE words refer immediately to the twelve disciples of our Lord. But what said he in his intercessory prayer? "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me, through their word." And what part of the statement here will not extend beyond his first followers?

Is it the *relation?* These are called "His own"—and they were indeed his own, by extraordinary office; but they were far more importantly his own, by saving grace. And thus he has a propriety in all Christians. If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh. He has a peculiar right to them, from covenant donation, and the execution of his trust. They were given him as so many sheep to feed; as so many scholars to teach; as so many patients to heal; as so many captives to redeem. They are therefore not their own, but bought with a price: and the ransom was no less than his own blood. The connexion between Him and them is so intimate and entire, that they are called his heritage, his children, his bride; the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones: yea, they are joined to the Lord, and of one spirit with him.

Is it the *condition?* They "were in the world." He was leaving it, and they were to be left in it: and from what it had been to him, they could judge what it would be to them: according to his own intimation, "The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." They found themselves, therefore, as lilies among thorns; as sheep among wolves. And he prayed not to have them taken out of the world, but only kept from the evil. And thus it is with his people now. They are in the world; and this is their field of action; and this is their sphere of duty and trial for a season. There they are to serve their generation; there they are to glorify God by doing and suffering his will. "But the world is much improved." It has advanced much in science and civilization; but it retains the same disposition towards real godliness as formerly: and is more perilous in its smiles than in its frowns: in its treacherous embraces than in its avowed hostilities. But if you are "His own," while you are "in the world," you will not

be of it: and He, whose you are, will not only keep you from falling, but render you useful in it, and bring you honourably out of it—Be of good cheer, says He, I have overcome the world.

Is it the *reality of his regard?* "He *had loved* his own which were in the world." What other principle could have actuated him; in selecting them; calling them; informing them; employing them; adopting them; honouring them; blessing them with his constant intimacy? They had not chosen him, but he had chosen them, and ordained them, that they should go and bring forth fruit. He treated them not as servants, but as friends; and all things that he had heard of the Father, he made known unto them. He could say, as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. And is not this true of all his people? Who said, deliver them from going down into the pit? Who bore their sins in his own body on the tree? Who shut the mouth of hell? Who opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers? —O Christian, who sought—and who saved thee? Whatever you are, whatever you have, is the effect of the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge.

Is it the *permanency of this affection? Having* loved his own which were in the world, he *loved them unto the end.* They tried him, and proved themselves very unworthy of his continued attachment. But he bore with their dulness and imperfections. He chided and reproved them; but this was not only compatible with his constancy, but resulted from it: for as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens: and faithful are the wounds of this friend. And now we see him at the last, all alive to their welfare; teaching and comforting them; washing their feet, and praying for them.—In the garden, when he found them sleeping, he extenuated the infirmity—The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. When he surrendered himself to his enemies, he stipulated for their exemption—Let these

go their way. He died with them in his heart. He rose and appeared to them; and though they had all forsaken him and fled in the hour of trial, he said, Be not afraid, Peace be to you. He laid his hands upon them, and while he blessed them, he was taken up into heaven. And did he forget them then? He sent them another Comforter that should abide with them for ever. And was this peculiar to them? He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He rests in his love. He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. A true friend loveth at all times. But there are few such friends to be found. Yet he abideth faithful. Job's brethren proved like a summer's brook. One told David in his distress, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. At my first answer, no one, says Paul, stood by me, but all men forsook me—but he adds, nevertheless the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.—So will it be with all those who trust in him: "They shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end."

"This God is the God we adore,
"Our faithful unchangeable friend;
"Whose love is as great as his power;
"And neither knows measure nor end.
"'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
"Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home:
"We 'll praise him for all that is past,
"And trust him for all that 's to come."

MARCH 1.—"*And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.*" Numb. x. 32.

WHILE this invitation is founded in benevolence, it also displays humility. Christians are convinced, that *they* can only give according as they have

received. But, from God's communications to them, they know that they *can* be useful, and that they *ought* to be useful to others. They never receive grace for themselves only. If the glory of the Lord has risen upon them, they are to arise and shine. If they are converted, they are to strengthen their brethren. If they are comforted, they are to comfort, with the same comforts, those who are in any trouble. If they are rich in this world, they are to do good, and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate—"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"—Hence says Moses to Hobab, "If thou go with us, what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

—And he repeats the assurance: "It shall be—yea, it shall be." And was it not so? Did he repent of his adhering to Israel? See what is said in Judges, and in Samuel, of his descendants. And was Obed-Edom a loser by the ark? Did not the sacred guest more than pay for its entertainment? "It was told David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God." Who is likely to be injured by casting in his lot with the followers of the Lamb? Will his family suffer? Many a wretch has reduced his wife and children to penury and ruin by his vices—but every principle of a good man will lead him to provide for his own: and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.—Will his substance? The play-house, the ale-house, the gaming-house, the house of her who lives in the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, will injure a man much more than the House of God. —Will his health? Is *this* likely to be injured, or benefited by temperance, and calm temper, and cheerful confidence, and benevolent feelings? Religion must befriend reputation, as it produces and

guards all the elements from which it is derived—while the name of the wicked shall rot.

Therefore, come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. We cannot promise you great things in the world; but the Lord will bless your bread and your water: and a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. We cannot promise you exemptions from affliction; but nothing shall befal you but what is common to man: and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, and will, with the temptation, also make a way for your escape. We cannot secure you from privations and sacrifices; but we can promise, that you shall be more than indemnified for every thing you do, or suffer, or lose, for the cause of God. He will not be unrighteous, to forget your work of faith, and labour of love. A cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. "There is no man," saith the Saviour, "that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." We can assure you, that if you travel with us, you shall feed on the manna, and drink of the rock, and be guided by the cloud, and behold the glory of the Lord, in the Wilderness: and then you shall share with us, beyond Jordan, the land flowing with milk and honey. How blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven: who have peace with God: who are delivered from the sting of a guilty conscience, and the torment of fear: who walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost: who rejoice in hope: who know that death is their friend, and heaven their home: who have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life! "Lo, this; we have searched it; so it is: hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

Lord! I have often heard this invitation—I now ɔcept it. I am a companion of them that fear Thee, ıd of them that keep thy precepts. "Remember ıe, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto ıy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I ıay see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice ı the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with ıine inheritance."

MARCH 2.—"*But Peter followed him afar off.*" Matt. xxvi. 58.

HIS, too, was better than forsaking him, and flee- ıg, as the rest did. Here was the working of some egree of principle. Here was some love to the aviour, or he would not have followed him at all -the lingering of that affection which may be ɜemingly smothered in the Christian, but can never e extinguished; and will soon be blown again ıto a flame.

But he was overcome by fear. His Lord was ɔprehended, and going to be tried and crucified. What if I, said Peter, should be found in the same oom as one of them! The fear of man bringeth snare. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, ıill he give for his life.

Yet this was very unbelieving in him. He had ɜen his Lord's miracles, and knew what he could o. He knew that he had actually stipulated for ıeir release in the garden, as the condition of his wn surrender. He knew that he had assured them, ıat after he was risen from the dead, he would ɔpear to them, and employ them as his witnesses; hich involved their preservation. What a differ- nce between Peter and Paul—Paul, who said, "None f these things move me; neither count I my life ear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with ɔy." And between Peter and Luther—Luther, who

when informed of his dangers, said, If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the houses, I would go—But Peter followed him afar off!

This was also very ungrateful. The Saviour had done much for him. He had healed, by a miracle, his wife's mother—He had called him to the Apostleship, the highest honour on earth—He had singularly distinguished him with James and John on several occasions—He had saved him by his grace, and enlightened him from above, and—was now going to suffer and die for him.—And a friend is born for adversity. Then, instead of keeping at a distance from us, we look for his attendance and sympathy. Peter could have unequivocally testified in favour of suffering innocence—but he hangs off! And Patience itself complains, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none! and for comforter, but I found none!"

All this, too, was in violation of his own profession and vows—that he was willing to follow him to prison and to death—that he would die with him rather than deny him—and all this had scarcely left his lips—and was uttered just after our Saviour had so solemnly forewarned him—Yet Peter followed him afar off.

This led to something worse; and I wonder not at the sequel. His after-conduct in denying him; and thrice; and swearing with oaths and curses; was only the continuance and the increase of his present reluctance. So it is: the way of error and sin is always down-hill; and once in motion, who can tell when and where a man will stop? You follow him afar off this hour, the next you are ashamed of him. You trifle with the Sabbath to-day; to-morrow you profane it. You now endure evil company; you will soon choose it—so true is it—"They proceed from evil to evil."

And yet, who of us can cast a stone at him?

not we verily guilty as well as Peter? Let us whether, though as yet we have not begun to e and to swear, saying, I know not the man, have not been following him afar off. Here let not depend upon the opinion of our fellow-crea-s—we may stand fair with them. But what they know of us? of our inward state? of our ciples and motives? What says the *heart?* our hearts condemn us not, then have we con-nce towards God." Yet even on this testimony must not absolutely rely—"*God* is greater than heart, and knoweth all things." The Laodiceans e satisfied with themselves at the very time when charged them with every one of the evils from ch they supposed themselves free. Has *He* not ewhat against us? May we not continue to read hear his Word, and keep our places in the Sanc-y, and even at his Table; and yet feel very little hat sacred fervour and delight that once accom-ied our devotions? Attendance upon the Saviour the means of grace is very distinguishable from itual worship. We may draw nigh to him with mouth, and honour him with our lips, while the rt is far from him. Does the *heart* lag behind? en are we following him afar off.

His people are himself. He that receiveth them eiveth him; and what we do not—to the least of of all his brethren, we do not to him. In the dis-ce of our regard to them; and especially our back-dness to notice and relieve and visit the poor and icted; are we not following him afar off?

Above all, does not the evil appear in the remote-s of our resemblance? We are commanded to ow him; and our conformity to him is essential all religion; and we may always judge of the ree, as well as the reality of our religion, by it. w far short of the model do we come? How tantly do we resemble that condescension, which shed the disciples' feet; that self-denial, which

pleased not himself; that fervour, which led him to say, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; that delight in obedience, which led him to say, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work—

And thus, by our negligence and indifference, we grieve his Holy Spirit. And rob our own souls. For he is all in all; he is the fountain of life; and it is good for us to draw *near* to Him. But when we follow him afar off, we cannot see him; and hear him; and converse with him. And woe unto us if trouble befals us, or the enemy meets with us—and he is most likely to do so then—when we are absent from Him.

Let me *sigh*—

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
"Prone to leave the God I love."

And let me *sing*—

"Thou Shepherd of Israel divine,
"The joy of the upright in heart,
"For closer communion I pine,
"Still, still to reside where Thou art.
"'Tis there I would alway abide,
"Nor ever a moment depart;
"Preserved evermore by thy side—
"Eternally hid in thy heart."

MARCH 3.—*Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.*" Rom. iii. 4.

BUT cannot God be true, and man be true also? Does the veracity of the one infer the falsehood of the other? Not absolutely; but in particular instances. There may be, and there often is, an opposition between their testimony: and when this is the case, we are not to hesitate a moment by

claims we shall be decided—If the whole world
one side, and He on the other—Let God be
but every man a liar. And, comparatively, the
lity of the one, must always be nothing to that
other. If we receive the witness of men, the
s of God is greater. And this will appear un-
ble, from four admissions.
he first regards the ignorance of man, and the
n of God. Man is fallible. He not only may
but he is likely to err. He may be deceived
utward appearances; by the reports of others;
s own reasonings. His powers are limited;
searches, in every direction, are soon checked;
are depths which he cannot fathom, heights
he cannot scale, complications which he can-
nravel. Let not the wise man glory in his wis-
How much of it is mere opinion and conjec-
With what follies have the greatest minds
charged! Where is the wise? Where is the
e? Where is the disputer of this world?
not God made foolishness the wisdom of this
l? But His understanding is infinite. He
s all things. He cannot be mistaken.
he second regards the mutability of man, and
nchangeableness of God. Creatures, from their
being, are mutable. Many of the angels kept
heir first estate. Adam fell from his original
tion. Who needs to be told, that man never
aues in one stay? New views gender new
gs, and these new pursuits. What pleases
y may offend to-morrow. Many are unstable
ater. No one is unchangeable. But God
es not. What he thinks now of any sub-
he always thought. And always will think—for
Him there is no variableness, neither shadow
rning.
he third regards the weakness of man, and the
ficiency of God. Man may threaten in fury,
be unable to execute. He may promise sin-

cerely; and his promises be vain words—he *cannot* fulfil them. In this respect he is not always to be judged of by his conduct. There are cases in which we censure, when, if we knew all, we should only pity. The man struggles with difficulties which have unexpectedly come upon him; and yields to dire necessity, and provides things honest in the sight of the Lord—who has seen all his heart and his hardships—though not in the sight of men. But God is almighty. He who made and upholds all things by the word of his power, speaks every thing, in the Scriptures.

The fourth regards the depravity of man, and the rectitude of God. Man goes astray, from the womb, speaking lies. He often intentionally deceives—It is his aim and study; and he rejoices in his success. Even men who are influened by religious principles, may be overcome of evil, and occasion our saying, Lord, what is man! How far from truth was the sentiment of Jonah—"I do well to be angry, even unto death." How lamentable was the falsehood of Abraham, when he said of his wife, She is my sister! How dreadful was the perjury of Peter, when he swore, "I know not the man!" But God is holiness itself. He is incapable of a wrong bias—he cannot be tempted to deceive.

When, therefore, we look at man—ignorant and fallible—varying according to his excitements—often unable to make good his engagements—yea, accessible to the influence of evil motives: and then contemplate God, in all the glories of his wisdom, immutability, almightiness, and rectitude—each being an everlasting and infinite preservative of truth—who can view these competitors for our belief, and not join with the Apostle, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

The use to which this fact should be applied, is to reduce our confidence in man, and increase our *con*fidence in God—

"Then let us trust the Lord alone,
"And creature confidence disown:
"Sure as on creatures we depend,
"Our hopes in disappointment end."

And yet the reverse of this is our practice. We yield where we should be cautious, and we hesitate where it is impossible for us to err. We turn from the Rock of Ages, and lean on the broken reed. And what is the consequence? "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Let us cease, then, from man. Not that we are to become universally suspicious, and suppose that there is no sincerity in the world. It was David's error to say in his haste, All men are liars. And when the Scripture says, There is no faithfulness in them; men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; it must be taken with qualification. Yet instances of inflexible integrity are not abundant. And we should not implicitly rely upon any one, especially in divine things. Let us respect great and good men, but not be enslaved by them. Let us not pin our faith to the sleeve of any authority merely human. Let us suffer no man to have dominion over our conscience; always searching the Scriptures to see whether these things are so—*there*.

For God is entitled to our absolute confidence.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Let us trust him as he deserves. Let us always place a ready and unshaken reliance on his Word. Let God be true, in its doctrines, and let us receive them, however mysterious. Let God be true, in its predictions; and whatever difficulties stand in the way, believe that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Let God be true, in its threatenings; and let us flee from the wrath to come. Let God be true, in its promises; and let us be strong in faith, giving glory to God.

"O for a strong and lasting faith
"To credit what the Almighty saith!
"T' embrace the message of his Son,
"And call the joys of heaven our own."

MARCH 4.—"*All his saints are in thy hand.*"
Deut. xxxiii. 3.

THESE *holy ones* are distinguished by many things from each other. Some of them are in public life and some in private. Some are rich and some poor. Some are young and some old—But all are equally dear to God; and partakers of the common salvation; in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. They pass under various denominations among men: and these too often keep them at a distance from each other, and lead them to mistake and censure each other: and often they would seem to wish to draw *Him* along with them, and confine his influences within their respective exclusivenesses. But no. He owns them

ll. They are all children of the same family, nd going to the same temple to worship; and owever they may differ in dress, or age, or stature, hey all stand in the same relation to each other, nd to himself. Some of them are strong, and thers are weak in faith. He has in his fold lambs s well as sheep, and in his family babes as well as oung men. But a bruised reed will he not break, nd a smoking flax will he not quench, but will ring forth judgment unto victory. This honour ave *all* his saints—"*All* his saints are in thy hand."

— In his fashioning hand. They are the clay, nd he is the potter, and he makes them vessels of onour, prepared unto every good work. He fearully and wonderfully made them as creatures. But hey are his workmanship by another and a nobler reation—"This people have I formed for myself: hey shall shew forth my praise."

— In his preserving hand. For now they are recious, they are the more exposed. They are alled a crown and a diadem; and the powers of larkness would gladly sieze it: but observe where t is placed for security: "Thou shalt be a crown f glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem n the hand of thy God"—and there they are safe, erfectly safe: safe, not owing to their strength, but o their situation. By another image the Saviour stablishes the same confidence. "My sheep hear ny voice, and I know them, and they follow me: nd I give unto them eternal life; and they shall ever perish, neither shall any man pluck them out f my hand. My father, which gave them me, s greater than all: and no man is able to pluck hem out of my Father's hand."

— In his guiding hand. To lead a blind man, ou take him in your hand—Thus the Lord leads is people. He knoweth the way that they take; ut they do not—I will bring the blind by a way hat they know not; I will lead them in paths that

they have not known. You take a little child in your hand to lead him. Though God, says Bishop Hall, has a large family, none of his children are able to go alone: they are too weak, as well as too ignorant. But fear not, says God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

— In his chastening hand. They are sometimes alarmed at their afflictions, and cry, Do not condemn me—as if they were in the hand of an enemy—but he is their father; and not like fathers of our flesh: for they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Luther therefore said, Strike on, Lord, strike on; for now I know I am thy child. We deserve to lose the rod, and by our improper behaviour we forfeit all claim to his correction; and we may well wonder and exclaim, Lord, what is man that thou shouldest magnify him, that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him, that thou shouldest visit him every morning and try him every moment? But he does not deal with us according to our desert. And therefore, rather than leave us to make flesh our arm, or the world our portion, he will remove every prop of support, and dry up every spring of comfort. But he does not afflict willingly. If needs be only, we are in heaviness: and when we mourn our faults, the rod drops upon the ground, and he hastens to wipe away our tears. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

— Whatever, therefore, Christians have to distress and perplex, here is enough to comfort and to satisfy them. "For all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God."

MARCH 5.—"*So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.*" Rom. vii. 25.

So ends this chapter, concerning which there has been much dispute. For some have contended that the Apostle does not here speak of himself; but personates another. They suppose that he refers to a Jew—under the Law, but not under Grace—awakened, but not renewed—convinced, but not converted. Yet can any unregenerate person, with truth, say—not only, "I consent to the law that it is good;" but, "With my mind I serve the law of God?" and, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man?"—an expression of godliness that characterized the very temper of the Messiah himself. *He* could say nothing more than "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy láw is within my heart."

At first view, the language of complaint may seem much too strong to apply to the experience of a real Christian. But what real Christian would find it too much to utter—when placed in the same state, and occupied in the same way, with the Apostle? That is—viewing himself before that God, in whose light the very heavens are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly; and who sees more pollution in our duties, than we ever see in our sins—That is, comparing himself with the rule of all rectitude, the Divine Law, whose spirituality is such as to extend to the thoughts and the desires of the mind, as well as the actions of the life, and which considers anger as murder, and the lust of the eye as adultery. What must the highest attainments of mortals be, compared with this absolutely perfect standard of holiness; yea, or even with the elevated and vast desires of a renewed soul!

We need not wonder that many are astonished and perplexed here. "The spiritual judgeth all things; but he himself is judged of no man." They

who are strangers to the warfare in which he is engaged can never clearly comprehend his language, or enter into those feelings which produce such a depth of confession and abasement. Those who have never been in the field, may be surprised at many things related by a veteran, in describing the campaigns he has passed through: but his old scar-worn comrade can attest the truth of them. In religious matters, more than in any other, the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. But the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

We allow that this chapter has been much perverted. There is no part of the Bible that Antinomians so much delight in, or which ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, so often quote. Such persons wrest also the *other* Scriptures to their own destruction. And are we to argue against the use of a thing from the abuse of it? What good thing is not abused? Yet we do not refuse raiment to the naked, because there are some who glory in what ought to remind us of our shame: or food to the hungry, because some make a god of their belly. And shall we refuse to sincere and humble souls, mourning over the evils of their own heart, the instruction and consolation here provided for them, for fear the interpretation should be applied to an improper purpose? No one, really taught of God, *will* abuse it; nor *can* he be more reconciled to his corruptions, or more satisfied with his deficiencies, in consequence of being able to adopt the language, as his own.—For shall they continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How can they who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? We are not to make sad the hearts of God's people, but to comfort them—for the joy of the Lord is their strength. And only the last day will shew how much this section of Scripture has strengthened the weak hands,

and confirmed the feeble knees of those who were deeming their existence peculiar, and concluding that they had no part with the Israel of God, till they heard Paul bewailing and encouraging himself thus—For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I MYSELF serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

MARCH 6.—"*Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.*" Deut. i. 21.

WE may, and we ought, to transfer what is here said to the Jews concerning Canaan, to ourselves, with regard to a better country, that is, a heavenly: for the one was designed to be typical of the other.

Observe the exhibition: "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee." Where? In the Scriptures. Not in its full development, for so it is a glory to *be* revealed, for it doth not *yet* appear what we shall be—but in its general nature; and in a way adapted to our present apprehensions —and likely to take hold of our mind. Hence so many figures are employed: all of which aid our conceptions, while they fall short of the subject.

But does he place it before our eyes to tantalize us, by awakening our notice, and drawing forth our admiration, and exciting our desire, when the boon is not within our reach?

Observe the command: "Go up and possess it,

as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee." This supposes it to be attainable: yea, it makes the attainment our duty. Our missing it, is not only our misery, but our crime. We shall be punished for neglecting so great salvation. It is our guilt—the guilt of the vilest disobedience to the most gracious authority: for he not only allows, but he enjoins us to seek first his kingdom and righteousness—and commands us to believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ. Are we doing *this?* For *He* is the way: and we come *unto God by him.*

Observe the encouragement: "Fear not, neither be discouraged." To this we are liable on two accounts. First. By a sense of our unworthiness. The greatness of the blessedness, when combined with a sense of our desert, astonishes the mind into a kind of incredulity: and makes hope seem no better than presumption. But every thing here is free, and designed to shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us. We are as welcome as we are unworthy. Why then should we refuse to be comforted?—Secondly. By a sense of our weakness. Who is sufficient for the distance, the difficulties, and the dangers? The Jews were dismayed by the report of the spies. The towns, said they, are walled up to heaven. There are the Anakims; in whose sight *we* were but as grasshoppers. The people were disheartened.

But, said Caleb, "Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are able." How did he mean? Without God? No. But with him, as their leader and keeper—and this he had promised. And is he not with you? Has he not said, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will keep thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." We cannot be too sensible of our weakness; but let us remember that his grace is sufficient for us. Has it not been sufficient for all those who have gone before us?

"Once they were mourning here below,
"And wet their couch with tears:
"They wrestled hard, as we do now,
"With sins, and doubts, and fears."

But their fears were vain. They overcame; and are now more than conquerors through him who loved them.

— But Jordan rolls between. So it was with the Jews; and it was even overflowing its banks at the time. But the ark divided the waters: they went through dry-shod; and their enemies were as still as a stone—till they were clean passed over.

MARCH 7.—"*I have called you friends.*"
John xv. 15.

WHAT condescension, and kindness, and grace, are here! For these must be the principle of this friendship, whether we consider his greatness, or our meanness and unworthiness. Lord, what is *man*, that *Thou* art mindful of him? and the *son* of man, that *Thou* visitest him?—Yet he *is* mindful of us; he *does* visit us—yea, he calls us his FRIENDS. And names and things, professions and realities, are the same with Him. If he calls us friends, he will treat us accordingly; and we may expect from him whatever the most perfect friendship can insure.

For instance. He will honour us with his confidence—the very thing he here mentions—"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." A servant is entrusted, not with secrets, but orders; and he is seldom informed of the reasons, even of these. Turning him into a confidant, is one of the

ways to exemplify Solomon's observation: "He that delicately bringeth up a servant, shall have him for his son at length;" and he will take greater liberties than a child. There is, indeed, respect due to a servant; but it is respect of another kind. We do not like a master or mistress who is above speaking to a domestic, unless in the language of menace or authority—Good sense will find out a happy medium between distance and fondness; between haughtiness, and a familiarity that inspires no deference. But unreserved confidence is for friends. Nothing is concealed between them. Abraham is called the friend of God: and, says God, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I shall do?" How did our Lord unbosom himself to his disciples? To you, said he, is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. When he was alone, he expounded all things unto them; he manifested himself to them, and not unto the world. And so now; the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.

If he calls us friends, he will give us freedom of access to him. The distance and ceremonies, which may be necessary to regulate the approach of others, are laid aside with a friend: the heart, the arms, the house, are all open to him. And does the Lord keep us at a distance? His language is invitation—"Come unto me." He allows us to come even to his seat; and to enter the secret of his pavilion. He permits us, at all times, to spread our most minute affairs before him: yea, he indulges us to live in his house, to sit at his table, to walk with him, to lean upon his bosom—Such honour have all his saints.

— If he calls us friends, he will reprove us. Whenever friendship is founded on proper principle, reproof will be one of its chief duties; and privileges too. Faithful are the wounds of a friend: and so David valued them—"Let the righteous smite me,

t shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me,—it hall be an excellent oil which shall not break my ead: for yet my prayer also shall be in their alamities." Moses makes the omission the proof of hatred—"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." But the Saviour will never incur this reproach: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

— If he calls us friends, he will counsel us. There are passages in the life of every man sufficient to confound a single understanding. But how pleasing is it, in doubts and perplexities, to fetch in aid from the judgment or experience of another, and who, we know, is concerned for our welfare! But He is "*The* Counsellor." "Counsel," says he, "is *mine*, and sound wisdom." He is a light to them that sit in darkness. He is a dissolver of doubts. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way—and they that follow it will find it to be pleasantness and peace.

— If he calls us friends, he will sympathise with us. There is no true friendship, unless we make the pleasures and the pains of our connexions our own; rejoicing when they rejoice, and weeping when they weep. To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewed from his friend. The natural language of the sufferer is, "Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!" Hence the complaint of the Saviour—"I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforter, but I found none"—for even all the disciples forsook him, and fled. But he will never inflict, what he endured. In all our affliction he is afflicted. To exemplify this, he assumed our nature. He became a man—to be a friend. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succour those that are tempted—and, therefore, though he is passed into the heavens, we have not an High Priest who

cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Yea, "He that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye."

— If he calls us friends, he will afford us assistance and succour. And this is the grand test of friendship. A friend loveth at all times; but is born for adversity; and *he* has forfeited all claim to the character, who says, in the hour of application, Go in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled, while he gives not the things that are needful! Yet, how often is this the case! How often are the words of Solomon verified—"Confidence in an unfaithful man in the time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint!" Many are very friendly when you want not their aid; especially while you are imparting, instead of receiving. You are their garden: they walk in you in summer, but abandon you in winter—then you have no flowers or fruits. You are their scaffold; they build with you —but when the work is done, they take you down, and lay you aside. But though the Saviour will never leave us nor forsake us, he has emphatically said, I will be with you in trouble. And his people have always found him a present help, when every other resource has failed. Some may really feel for us, but be unable to help us. But nothing is too hard for the Lord. Even in death he will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

Thus he treats his friends—How do they treat him? Have we never given him cause to say, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" Have we never betrayed a want of confidence in him? Have we never been ashamed of him? Never denied him before men? Have we not often preferred our own ease and honour to his cause and glory? We can never make him adequate returns for his goodness—but have we made him suitable returns? Rather, will not an honest review of our temper and conduct constrain us to blush, and say—

"O were I not so vile and base,
"I could not thus my friend requite;
"And were not he the God of grace,
"He'd frown, and spurn me from his sight."

MARCH 8.—"*Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*" Ps. xxxiii. 18.

This is a very encouraging character. They who cannot claim the higher distinctions of religion, may surely know that they "fear God, and hope in his mercy."

Some may wonder at the combination; and suppose that the qualities are incompatible with each other. But the first Christians "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." They may think that the fear will injure the hope, or the hope the fear. But they are even mutually helpful: and they are not only never so beautiful, but never so influential as when they are blended. The fear promotes hope, by the evidence it affords; and by keeping us from loose and careless walking—which must affect our peace and pleasure. And hope no less befriends this fear. For never is God seen so glorious, so worthy of all our devotedness to him, as when we hope in his mercy; and even the more assured we are of his regard, the more we shall enquire, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?—the more we shall tremble at the thought of offending and grieving him; the more we shall continue upon our knees, praying, Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, *my* Strength, and *my* Redeemer. It is called "a lively hope;" and Christians know, by experience, that upon all their principles and duties, it has the same influence as the Spring has upon the fields and the gardens.

Despondence of mind has the same effect upon our feelings and obedience as frost upon the stream: it chills, hardens, and stagnates. But Divine love dissolves the ice, and the waters flow.

God is a Spirit, and has none of our senses and members; but in speaking to us, he makes use of language that we can understand.—His *eyes* are upon them that fear him, and hope in his mercy.

— The eyes of his *knowledge* are upon them. Every thing in their affairs comes under his notice. He knows all their walking through this great wilderness; and nothing befals them without their Heavenly Father. Parents cannot always have their eye upon a child. They may be engaged, or be afar off, or asleep. But He is always at hand; He is never diverted or perplexed; He never slumbers or sleeps.

— The eyes of his *affection* are upon them. The eye not only affecteth the heart, but follows it. It turns with the object of attachment; it sparkles with delight while dwelling upon it; and when deprived of the sight, continues looking in the direction of departure—as the disciples stood gazing up towards heaven after their beloved Saviour. Oh! to be the object of God's love! To be precious in his sight, and honourable! But He "takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." "He will rest in his love: He will joy over them with singing."

— The eyes of his *providence* are upon them. Therefore it is added—"To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." That is—for a part is put for the whole—to secure them from all danger, and to supply all their wants. In cases the most perilous and extreme, He is able to do for them exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think. We are not to look for miracles; but it is only because the power and truth of God can do without them.

"For sooner all Nature shall change,
"Than one of God's promises fail.

"How safe and how happy are they
"Who on their good Shepherd rely!
"He gives them out strength for their day,
"Their wants He will surely supply.
"He ravens and lions can tame;
"All creatures obey his command:
"Then let me rejoice in his Name,
"And leave all my cares in his hand."

MARCH 9.—"*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*" Ephes. vi. 10.

To this we must be brought. Nature can never do the work of grace. Reason cannot be a substitute for faith. Education cannot render needless the teaching of the Spirit. Vain must all our exertions be, without His agency. Without His influence we may have the form of godliness, but not the power; we may be reformed, but not renewed; we may become other creatures, but not new ones.

What is the use we are to make of this admission? Are we to derive from it ease in sin? self-justification? excuses for indolence? reasons for despair? Self-despair, indeed, grows out of it; but no other. There is hope in Israel concerning this thing. We *have* a resource; and it is *accessible:* and we are commanded to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

When we plead for this doctrine, we are often charged with enthusiasm. But the Scripture asserts, that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus; that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; that hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.—And we retort the charge upon those that would exclude this influence. For what is enthusiasm,

but visionary hope; groundless expectation? And what can be more delusive, than looking for an end without suitable and adequate means? a mighty effect, without a more powerful cause? a practice, the most alien from our depraved nature, without a divine principle? a gathering of grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles? And this is the case with those who deny the operations of that grace which is alone sufficient for us. We allow that we draw the character of the Christian high; and expect from him great things—that he should be renewed in the spirit of his mind; that he should walk by faith, and not by sight; that he should overcome the world; and have his conversation in Heaven. But then we have means answerable to all this. We have a principle adequate to the practice. We have a cause far superior to all these grand results. We allow that the work of a Christian, as it is described in the Bible, looks fitter for an angel than for a fallen weak man; but this fallen weak man has more than the sufficiency of an angel for the discharge of it—his sufficiency is of God!

Such a discovery, such an assurance is necessary. We are depraved creatures, and we cannot be ignorant of it. We have inward repugnancies to spiritual duties. We are surrounded with outward difficulties. On the side of sin there is number, example, constant solicitation. Our slothful heart cries, "There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets"—With all this known and felt, who could enter a religious course with pleasure or vigour, without the certainty of effectual aid? Possibility, probability, is not enough. Mere hope is not enough. Our hands hang down, our knees tremble, our very souls are chilled, unless we have a full and express persuasion, that God will be with us and bear us through. And here, therefore, he meets us, and says, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will

uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Rely on me. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. I can enlighten the darkest understanding. I can turn the heart of stone to flesh—Take hold of my strength, and be more than a conqueror—I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

At the sound of this animation, every thing revives in me, like vegetation at the call of spring. I am filled with confidence and courage—weak in myself, I am strong in another—and almighty in the God of my salvation.

And is it not better for me, that I should be a constant suppliant at the mercy-seat, than have no reasons for calling upon God—being able to do without him? Is it not better for me to depend upon the God of all grace, for the continual supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, than to have a fund of my own? The sufficiency lodged in me, must have been limited and finite; but in the Lord Jehovah I have everlasting strength. I could not trust in my own heart—but I can rely on his word. I can never be so willing to supply myself, as he is ready to succour me.

"Though in ourselves we have no stock,
"The Lord is nigh to save;
"The door flies open when we knock,
"And 'tis but ask, and have."

MARCH 10.—"*Will a man rob God?*" Mal. iii. 8.

— Is it probable? Is it possible?

Can he be so disingenuous? What! rob a father, a friend, a benefactor! The best of all fathers! The kindest of all friends! The most generous of all benefactors!

Can he be so daring?—To rob a Being so high and sacred; and whose glory so enhances the offence'

To injure a fellow-subject is felony, but to injure the King is treason. To steal from a man is injustice; but to steal from God is sacrilege. The wretch adds profaneness to violence when he breaks, not into a house, but a temple, and takes off things dedicated to the service of the Deity.

Can he be so irrational?—To rob a Being, not when he is absent, for he never is absent; but when he is present—not in the night, but in the day; and darkness and light are both alike to him—not when he sees not, observes not, but while he is looking on, and *must* look on—for his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he pondereth all his goings!

Can he be so desperate?—To rob one who can, who will punish; and whose wrath is not only unavoidable, but intolerable? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

Yet says God—and he cannot be mistaken; or accuse unrighteously—"Ye have robbed *me*." But on whom falls the charge? A Pharaoh only, who would not let the people go? a Nebuchadnezzar, who carried away the vessels of the Sanctuary? a Belshazzar, who profaned them? an Ananias and a Sapphira, who kept back part of the property they had sold? a Herod, who beheaded John? or a Nero, who slew Paul? Alas! the criminals were less obvious characters, and are found much nearer home—they are to be found in our own houses—they are to be found in the house of God!

Who has not robbed God of *property?* Our wealth is not our own. We are only stewards. It looks suspicious when a gentleman's steward becomes very rich, and dies affluent. It is even so with professors of religion. It would be better for them to die *comparatively* poor; it would be better for their reputtation; it would be better for their relations—a little, honestly obtained, would be better than a large accumulation embezzled from God—it would be more sweet and more efficient. Substance is entrusted to its occupiers, for certain purposes plainly laid down in

the Scripture; and the providence of God is perpetually calling upon you for it. Do you discharge these claims? or do you alienate from them, by hoarding or extravagance? How much do some *unjustly* expend; in table-luxuries, in costly dress, in magnificent furniture? And they are fond of displaying these. They have little reason—They glory in their shame—for these are all robberies. They are purloined from God's cause, or God's poor.

Who has not robbed God of *time?* The *Sabbath* he expressly claims for himself, and it is called the Lord's Day. Have we not often robbed him of much of this—perhaps of all—by worldly accounts, by evil company, by idle visits, by doing our own ways, and finding our own pleasures? *Youth* is the morning, the spring of life: it is our best season, and therefore God has a right to it, and calls upon us to remember his demands. But have we not partially, or wholly robbed him of these days, squandering them away in vanity, folly, and vice? *All* our moments and opportunities are his; and he commands us to redeem the time: but who lays to heart the brevity and uncertainty of life? Who values it as "the day of salvation?" Who seizes it as the only season of usefulness? Who rises early?

> "Where is that thrift, that avarice of time,
> "(O glorious avarice!) thought of death inspires?"

Where is *He* in all our ways, who said, "I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work."

Who has not robbed him of the *heart?* This was made for him; and he demands it—"My son, give me thine heart." But the fear of the heart, the confidence of the heart, the gratitude of the heart, the attachment of the heart—we have transferred to the creature from the Creator, God over all, blessed for evermore.

And may not the same be said of our *talents*—

whether learning, or the powers of conversation, or the retentiveness of memory, or our influence over others?

Let us not affect to deny the charge, and ask, wherein have we robbed thee? But let us repair to the footstool of Mercy, and cry, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?"

"But there is forgiveness with Him that he may be feared: and with him there is plenteous redemption." There is. And we may, and we ought to approach him with the encouragement of hope. But this hope must be founded on his own invitations and promises. It must bring us "unto God *by Him*," who said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." To pray to God to save such creatures in any other way, is to disobey his dearest command. It is to affront and insult him; by beseeching him to be untrue, and unrighteous; to frustrate his grace, and to make Jesus Christ to be dead in vain. But in him he can be just, and yet the justifier. He can redeem Jacob, and glorify himself in Israel.

We shall also be turned away from all our iniquity: for he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy. We shall also sorrow after a godly sort; and instead of complaining of any of them, we shall cheerfully acquiesce in all the methods of his grace and providence—and remember, and be confounded, and never open our mouth more, because of our shame, when He is pacified towards us for all that we have done.

MARCH 11.—"*I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.*" Is. lxiii. 7.

THERE are three ways in which we should resolve to do this. To others. To ourselves. And to God.

To *others*, we should mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, in a way of conversation. "Let

no corrupt communication," says the Apostle, "proceed out of your mouth." But where there is nothing immoral or indecent, there may yet be much that is trifling and vain: he therefore adds, "But that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." And here is a subject for discourse, not only innocent, but profitable. A *saying*, not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptation; and such as Moses and Elias would delight to join in, were they in company with us. We should also mention them to others, in a way of recommendation. Some are convinced of sin, and ready to despair; and nothing but the exceeding riches of this grace can keep them from it. And some are seeking happiness where we know they can never find it. Let us therefore say to them, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." This, coming from our own experience, and enforced by our own example, may save a soul from death. Especially, too, if we can bear a *final* testimony to the truth, and say, with the departing Henry, "You have heard the dying words of many—These are mine: I have found a life of communion with Christ, the happiest life in the world."

— We should also mention the lovingkindnesses of God to *ourselves*. There is such a thing as self-converse; and we wish it were more common. It is said, fools talk much to themselves—but wise men will talk more. David enjoins this: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still:" and he also was an example of it: "I commune with my own heart, and my spirit made diligent search." Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me. Hence he chides his own soul: "Why

art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Are you discouraged by your unworthiness, and the greatness of your guilt? Bring before your minds the freeness and the fulness of his mercy, and his lovingkindnesses to others, who had no more claim upon him than yourselves. Are you in trouble? Recal his goodness in former difficulties; and say, O my desponding soul!

"Did ever trouble yet befal,
"And he refuse to hear thy call?
"And has he not his promise pass'd,
"That thou shalt overcome at last?"

Mention them also to yourselves, to excite you to imitation. Has he been so ready to forgive, and daily loaded me with his benefits? and shall I, O my soul, be implacable and uncharitable? Let me be a follower of God. Let me be merciful, even as my Father who is in heaven is merciful.

— We should mention his lovingkindnesses to *God* himself, in the various exercises of devotion—In expostulating with him: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?"—In pleading with him. If we fill our mouth with arguments, they must be fetched from his own goodness: "For thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."—In praying for ourselves: "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy Name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble."—In interceding for others—the conversion of our kindred, the salvation of sinners, the prosperity of the Church: "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem."—In thanksgiving: "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me."

Alas! how seldom does God hear this from us! There was a time when this heavenly exercise commenced—and O that it had been earlier!—But it will never end. They that dwell in His house will be still praising Him.

Because my finite capacity will not admit of blessedness infinite in the degree, it shall be infinite in the duration; and, by happy reviews of the past, and unbounded prospects of the future, I shall feel perpetually growing beatitudes, and shall be always singing a new song. My mourning days; and my warring days; and my watching days; and my praying days; will soon be past—But

"My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
"While life, or breath, or being last,
"Or immortality endures."

MARCH 12.—"*By love serve one another.*" Gal. v. 13.

THIS admonition implies our connexion with, our dependence upon, and our obligation to each other. The service it enjoins is levied upon all, without exception; and is to be displayed in every way in which we can afford each other assistance.

But let me observe, what it requires as the *principle* of the practice—Love—"By love serve one another."

The principle may be wanting where the service is not. And this may be easily proved and exemplified. A man has a sum of money to dispose of; he hears of a person by whom it is desired, and to whom it will be useful; and he advances it on proper security. But is the borrower's need, or his own gain, the motive?—A hospital is built for the reception of poor patients. A rich man in the neighbourhood becomes a subscriber and a patron. "He is so charitable!" Nay; he wishes to maintain the character of a man of liberality; and he fears appearing to a disadvantage, when compared with his wealthy neighbour. Hence some who give, give in a way that will be sure to make it known: they therefore impart it through the medium of some other—in spite of the admonition, not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth. Some would never give, if the name was not printed. Some connect themselves with public institutions, and labour to establish and enlarge them, who would individually do nothing—but here they are put upon the committee, and gain distinction. But love seeketh not her own—It regards only the good of the recipient. There are four reasons why we should serve from this principle.

First. Without it, the service has no value or excellency in the sight of God. It may be useful to the beneficiary; but it will be nothing to the benefactor—Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels; and give all my goods to feed the poor; and even give my body to be burnt; and have not love; it profiteth me nothing. The Lord looketh to the heart. If this be right, the least service is regarded by him; and where it is not, the most costly sacrifices are disdained. "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love

those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Secondly. This will render the service pleasing to the performer. It is the nature of love to make even difficult things easy, and bitter ones sweet. This made the seven years of hard labour, which Jacob served for Rachael, seem to him as so many days. Every thing follows the heart, not only really, but cheerfully.

Thirdly. What is done from love, will excel in the manner. Being done willingly, and pleasantly, it will be done more gracefully, and welcomely. What a man does grudgingly, he does disagreeably, harshly, repulsively. He puts on a north-east face; turns himself half round; murmurs and complains—perhaps reproaches too; and if he yields at last, you feel no more obliged than if he refused. The ungracious, unfeeling mode spoils the thing. Men may act the hypocrite, but it is almost impossible, without love, to act *courteously* and *kindly*. But where love actuates, the sufferer is not insulted while he is relieved. Alms are not flung at him, instead of being given. The wound of distress is not torn open, but gently touched with an angel-hand. Oh, I have seen, I have heard some, refuse entirely, or in a degree, in a way that has soothed, and even satisfied, the unsuccessful petitioner—"I wish it *was* in my power —I lament my inability—I wish this trifle was ten times more—Such as it is, the blessing of God go with it—and with thee." I wonder not that love

is called a *grace*—I am sure it deserves the name, not only for its origin, but for its carriage and behaviour.

Lastly. This will make the service more efficient. It will constantly excite us, and we shall think we have done nothing while any thing remains to be done. For love is generous; it does not stand conditioning. It will not be stinted by rules, and set measures; it does not want urgings and excitements, like reluctance and taskings. The person influenced by love, cannot, without shame, sit and enjoy the luxuries of his table, while Penury and Distress are his next-door neighbours. He cannot go out of his road to preserve his sensibility from being shocked at the sight of a bleeding traveller. He will let his eye affect his heart. He will not say to the hungry and naked, Be ye warmed, and be ye fed, while he gives them not such things as are needful. He will give, to his power; yea, and beyond his power—if some were to judge. He will not incapacitate himself for beneficence, by indulging extravagance of any kind. He will labour with his own hands, and guide his affairs with discretion, to increase his means. He will not grow weary in well-doing; and when he meets with instances of ingratitude, though he will lament the depravity, he will not suffer them to justify illiberality.

"All this is trying and difficult." It is. And therefore love is necessary—"By love serve one another."

This sweet little verse, if universally acted upon, would immediately turn this earth into a paradise—"Owe no man," therefore, "any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law"—and the Gospel too: for "the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned."

— You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—How did He—in the face of our unworthiness—and

foreseeing our sad returns—how did he—look at Bethlehem, and Calvary—how did he, by love, serve us? Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour.

MARCH 13.—"*When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*" Deut. xx. 1.

ISRAEL was now a camp, rather than a nation. Though Canaan was given them, they were to take and defend it by force of arms. Hitherto they had seen little of war, having had only a few brushes in their journey with inferior adversaries. But things would soon become more serious; and they would see horses, and chariots, and a people more than themselves. Hence they would be liable to alarm; and it was necessary for them to know what they had to embolden them. Moses therefore admonishes and encourages them; and both the admonition and the encouragement will apply to ourselves.

Religion is a state of conflict. All Christians are soldiers. They wage, indeed, a good warfare. It will bear examination. Every thing commends it; and every thing *requires* it—it is not only a just, but a *necessary* war—all that is valuable is at stake—and we must conquer or die. But it is a trying warfare. It continues through every season, and in every condition. It is here admitted, that the forces of their enemies may be very superior to their own, in number, wisdom, vigilance, and might.

Hence the danger of apprehension and alarm. And fortitude is the virtue of a warrior; and none needs it more than the man who wrestles with all the powers of darkness. And none has more grounds for courageousness than he. If he considers his foes and himself only, his confidence must fail him: but he has something else to consider—

First, The Divine presence: "For the Lord thy God is with thee." And, "How many," said Antigonas to his troops, dismayed at the numbers of the foe; "How many do you reckon me for?" But God is all-wise and almighty. Nothing is too hard for the Lord—and if He be with us, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them"—"Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world."

Secondly, His agency: "Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This, to the Jew, was not only a proof, but a pledge: it not only shewed what he *could* do, but was a voucher for what he *would* do. For He is always the same: and will not suffer what he has done to be undone. It would have been strange, after opening them a passage through the sea, to have drowned them in Jordan. What would he have done for his great Name, after placing himself at their head to lead them to the Land of Promise, if he had suffered them to be overcome by the way? He who begins the good work, is not only able to finish, but begins it for the very purpose. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
"To save from sorrows or from sins:
"The work that Wisdom undertakes,
"Eternal Mercy ne'er forsakes."

MARCH 14.—"*That I may win Christ.*"
Phil. iii. 8.

Is this the language of Paul? Is *he* the candidate for Christ? How well might he say, that in the subjects of Divine Grace, old things are passed away, and all things are become new! What a change must have taken place in his own experience! Compare the man with himself. Now a blasphemer of the Name of Jesus—and now asking, at his feet, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Now persecuting his followers—and now preaching the faith that once he destroyed. Now living a Pharisee, and boasting of his Jewish privileges and attainments—now saying, What things were gain to me, these I count loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung—that I may *win Christ.*

But had he *not* won him *already?* Yes, for many years he had known, and served, and enjoyed him. But intense affection makes us think that we are never sure enough of the object. Intense delight in any good makes us long after more fruition. There is this difference between a convinced sinner, and an experienced believer in Christ: the former desires only from a sense of want; the latter desires also, from the relish of the enjoyment. For *he* has tasted that the Lord is gracious. And hence he the more earnestly cries, Lord, evermore give me this bread. Taste provokes appetite. Advancement, by increasing knowledge, and improving skill, produces humility and dissatisfaction. Hence the nearer any one approaches completeness in any thing, the more easily he discerns, and the more mortifyingly he feels, his remaining deficiencies. And no wonder, therefore, the Apostle should here say, "I have not attained, I am not already perfect:" for here, so

immense is the blessing, that what is possessed will never bear a comparison with what remains: and as the object is infinite, and the faculty finite, there will always be a possibility of addition; and the happiness derivable from the Saviour will not only be eternal, but eternally increasing.

But is this prize attainable by us? How is He placed before us in the Scripture? Is he exhibited only to our view—or proposed to our hope? Are not *all* allowed, invited, commanded to seek him? And all *without exception?* And could *any* be condemned for rejecting him, if he was not placed within their reach?

But what is necessary to make him our own? Not *desert.* Witness the characters of those who are encouraged to hope in him: He came to seek and to save that which was lost; He died for the ungodly. Indeed, if any meritorious qualifications were to be possessed, or conditions to be performed, in order to our obtaining him, our case would be desperate.

But *desire* is necessary. Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find. Warrant is one thing, disposition is another: unless we are convinced of our need of him, we cannot long after him; and unless we value him, the blessing could not gratify and content us, if acquired.

Sacrifice is therefore needful; and when the desire is supremely urgent and active, and nothing can be a substitute for the object, we shall be ready to part with whatever stands in competition with him. Hence we read in the Scripture, of selling all to buy the pearl of great price. Buying, here, does not signify giving an equivalent for him—who could think of this? But, as in buying, something is parted with for the purpose; so it is here. And whether it be the pride of reason, or self-righteousness, or our worldly connexions and interests, or our sins, that keep us back from him, we must

forsake them all; and follow him. And shall we not be more, infinitely more than indemnified—if we *win Christ?*

MARCH 15.—"*That I may win Christ.*" Phil. iii. 8.

— AND what a prize is He! The tongue of men and of angels would infinitely fail to do *Him* justice. The Sacred Writers, though inspired, labour for language and imagery to aid us to conceive a little of his worth. He is the hope; the Saviour; the consolation; the glory of his people Israel. He is Lord of all. In Him all fulness dwells. In winning Him, we gain all pure, spiritual, durable, satisfying good: a way to God; a justifying righteousness; a sanctifying Spirit; a sufficiency of grace to help in time of need; a peace that passeth all understanding; a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory—we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

If an ancient Philosopher had been asked, what one thing would entirely have met all his wants, and satisfied all his hopes and desires? he would have been at a loss for an answer. But ask a Christian this question, and, without a moment's hesitation, he replies, All I need, all I wish, is to "win Christ." Let me attain Him, and I shall—I can look no further.

How blessed, then, is the winner! He is happy now. Happy alone. Happy in trouble. Happy in death—How much more happy will he be hereafter! By this acquisition he is raised above the condition of Adam in Paradise—above the estate of angels in heaven. *His* portion is to be judged of by what *Christ* is, and has—for he has gained *Him*—he has won *Christ!!*

But how foolish the despiser! How poor! How wretched! How miserable in time! How much more miserable in eternity!

How *can* we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? O my soul, hear him and live—"He that findeth me, findeth life; and shall obtain favour of the Lord: but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death."

MARCH 16.—"*When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.*" Gal. i. 15.

PAUL is here referring to two events—his natural birth, and his spiritual birth—the one connecting him with the world—the other with the Church. The former of these is common to all men; the latter is confined to few. The former affords us no security from the wrath to come—"Because they are a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." The latter makes us heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Both these, therefore, are important; but the one is far more momentous than the other. The multitude do not think so. They keep the day of their birth, and are thankful for the continuance of life; but never inquire—Has He, who separated me from my mother's womb, called me by his grace? Has He made me not only a creature, but a new creature? Am I not only a partaker of that life whose days are few and evil, but the life which the just live by faith, and which shall endure for ever?

Yes; *this* is the main thing. And you will deem it so—when conscience shall be awakened: when heart and flesh shall fail; and the cold hand of death lays hold of you, to bring you into the pre-

sence of the Judge of all. To this therefore attend; and regard it without delay. We would not have you indifferent to the beauties of Nature, and the bounties of Providence: but let it be your chief concern to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Say, with David, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." But O, rest not satisfied till you can say, with Paul, "He called me by his grace."

Regeneration is necessary. The nature of religion demands it. The nature of God demands it. The nature of heaven demands it. Ye *must* be born *again*. Observe *again*. Paul, you see, had been born twice: and if you are not born twice before you die once, it had been good for you if you had never been born. Those born once only, die twice —they die a temporal, and they die an eternal death. But those who are born twice, die only once—for on them the second death hath no power.

Paul was as fully persuaded of his being called by grace as he was of his having been separated from his mother's womb. What a satisfaction must this be to the assured individual! All are not equally privileged. Some have fears concerning their conversion.—But even this anxiety is a token for good.—And let them remember, that there is a certainty attainable not only in Christian doctrine, but in Christian experience; and give all diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Let them wait on the Lord and keep his way; and read the things that are written unto them that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that they may know that they have eternal life.

— Little, when Paul was born, did any know what he was destined to be. The father embraced him; the mother forgot her anguish, for joy that a man was born into the world. His birth was no way distinguished from any other. His religious

friends could not look into the future, nor conjecture the powers he was to develop, the space he was to occupy in history, the labours he was to perform, the advantages he was to render the human race to the end of time—nothing of all this could they foresee in this helpless babe. But here was the acorn of the oak. God sees the end from the beginning. Gamaliel's pupil, the zealous Pharisee, the bloody persecutor, the praying penitent, the Christian disciple, the inspired apostle—all, all were present to His view when He separated him from his mother's womb. And even then He had done virtually what He did actually in the journey to Damascus—called him by his grace. Time is nothing with Him. Design is accomplishment. Every thing has its season. All the circumstances of life, and godliness; of our birth, and our conversion; are arranged by Infinite Wisdom and Goodness. Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints. He hath done all things well.

"Heaven, earth, and sea, and fire, and wind,
"Shew me thy wonderous skill;
"But I review myself, and find
"Diviner wonders still.

"Thy awful glories round me shine;
"My flesh proclaims thy praise:
"Lord, to thy works of Nature join
"Thy miracles of grace."

MARCH 17.—"*The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*" Rom. x. 12.

POWER and benevolence are rarely united in our fellow-creatures. Here is one who has abundance; but he has no disposition to do good: he turns away his ear from hearing the poor; and seems to live

as if he was born for himself only. Yea, the disposition often decreases, as the capacity increases; so that there are some who not only give less comparatively, but less really, than they did when they were poorer. Then it hardly seemed worth their while to be covetous and to hoard, but now they have the means, and the temptation conquers them: and in their commerce of charity, silver is used instead of gold, and copper instead of silver. On the other hand, there is many a one who has bowels of mercies; but he can only pity, and shed unavailing tears over victims of distress. He is compelled to say only, Be ye warmed and be ye filled, for he has it not in his hand to give such things as are needful for the body—his hand is shortened that it cannot save, though his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. But some few there are, in whom the means, and the mind to use them, are found united. The Lord increase their number! These are little images of Himself, in whom we equally find greatness and goodness, the resources and the readiness of compassion. "He is over all; and he is rich unto all that call upon him."

Let me look at his greatness.—He is over all. All beings of every rank are under his absolute control. He rules over all *material* agents—over all *animal* agents: over all *human* agents: over the best of men; the greatest of men; the worst of men—over all *invisible* agents: over devils; over angels; over departed spirits. He is Lord both of the dead and the living. How astonishing then are his possessions and his dominion! A nation seems a great thing to us. But what is the greatest nation, to our earth? And what is our earth, to the luminaries of heaven? Many of these are discernible by the naked eye. When this fails, art assists nature: and Herschel sees innumerably more. When the telescope fails, the imagination plunges into the immensity beyond,

and we exclaim, Lo! these are parts of his ways—But how small a portion is known of Him.

"And will this mighty Lord
"Of glory condescend;
"And will he write my name,
"My Father and my Friend?"

Yes, for his mercy equals his majesty—and the *same* Lord who is over all, "is rich unto all that call upon him." His goodness has three characters.

First. It is plenteous—He is *rich* unto all that call upon him. Some, if they are bountiful, are poor in bounty. And this appears not only in the smallness of their gifts, but in the mode of giving. It seems done by constraint, not willingly and of a ready mind. It does not drop from them as honey from the comb, or flow like water from a spring—it seems an unnatural effort. You feel no more respect when they give much, than when they give little—every thing like nobleness is destroyed by the manner: the meanness of the disposition is betrayed; and the poor-spirited mortal can no more give kindly and generously, than a clown can dance gracefully. But the Lord God is a sun—He gives grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold. He is abundant in goodness and in truth. He abundantly pardons. And while he gives liberally, he upbraideth not.

Secondly. It is impartial. He is rich *unto all* that call upon him. For there is no difference between Jew and Greek. And the same will apply to sex, and age, and calling, and condition, and character. The proclamations of divine grace exclude none, whatever be their circumstances—and it is well they do not. If *any* were excluded, awakened souls would be sure to find themselves among the exceptions. But what exceptions can any find when they read—"Preach the Gospel to every creature;" "Whosoever will, let him take

f the water of life freely!" Evangelical mercy is ke Noah's Ark, that took in the clean and the nclean—only with this difference in favour of the uth above the type! there all the beasts came nt as they went in; whereas, if any man be in hrist, he is a new creature. He changes all he ceives, and sanctifies all he saves.

Thirdly. It is wise—He is rich unto all that *call* pon him. This is required, and cannot be dispensed ith. Not because God wills it; but because it emeth good in his sight. He knows that we should ever praise him for blessings which we do not value; nd that we never could be made happy by them—r that which gratifies, is something that relieves our ant; fulfils our desire; accomplishes our hope; and rowns our endeavours. God's way, therefore, is to ake us sensible of our state, and to cause us to hun-er and thirst after righteousness—and then we shall e filled: for whoso asketh, receiveth; and he that eeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall e opened.

God reveals himself, not only for our encou-agement, but imitation; and vain is our confidence n him, without conformity to him. Therefore, ays the Apostle, Be ye followers of God, as dear hildren. How? In what?—and walk in love, as hrist also hath loved us, and given himself for us, n offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling avour. Men would be like God, as the greatest of eings; but we are to be like him, as the best of eings. They would resemble him in his natural erfections; but we are to resemble him in his oral. They would, as He is, be over all, and gladly ave every thing at their own disposal—but we are o be holy, and true, and patient, and forgiving, and nder, as He is; and, according to our resources, o be rich unto all that call upon us.

MARCH 18.—"*Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*" Acts iii. 1.

THE associates here were Peter and John. We should not have noticed this particularly, did we not find them so frequently and constantly together in the Scripture. The instances will readily occur to all attentive readers of the New Testament. But the reasons of this peculiar intimacy are not mentioned. Each of the two had a brother among the Apostles. But there is an amity superior to relationship: there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. It is commonly supposed, that those who attract each other and unite, very much resemble each other: whereas, Peter and John seem to have been more dissimilar than any other two of the Apostles that could have been selected. But may not the unlikeness be considered as one of the causes of this friendship? Peter knew the excellencies of John were the opposites to his imperfections, and would tend to rectify them. Peter was eager and severe. John was more patient and affectionate. Peter was the hand, John the eye—but they were the more mutually necessary to each other.

Peter had denied his Lord, and rendered his attachment to him questionable. Perhaps John had been more compassionate towards him after his fall, and more ready to restore him in the spirit of meekness. David, after his backsliding, prayed, "Let them that fear Thee turn unto me"—and some do this much more freely than others.

But connexions and intimacies are not always accountable. They often depend on things impossible for us to describe. They come from God, who has peculiar purposes to answer, and link us together by invisible chains. See an instance of this: "It came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was

knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." Though an heir apparent, Jonathan was at once attached to a man who was to exclude him from the succession. But the thing was of the Lord. How often do we read of God's giving a man favour in the eyes of another!

We have here a word in recommendation of friendship. It is sanctioned by Scripture and example. It is not good for man to be alone; but we are not required to put even every one we love into our bosom. Peter had many colleagues, but one companion, one friend.

Their friendship was religious; and instead of leading them to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful; it took them to the House of God in company. Those connexions are the most valuable, in which the Bible is a witness between us; in which another world is not forgotten: in which we are bound by faith and love which are in Christ Jesus: in which we walk together as heirs of the grace of life, that our prayers be not hindered.

We see that public devotion has claims upon us. God has commanded us not to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;" and he has said, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The worship of the Sanctuary enlivens our feelings; endears us to each other; and keeps the distinctions of life from becoming excessive—There the rich and the poor meet together; and seek and serve a Being, with whom there is no respect of persons. Happy they who love the place where His honour dwelleth! Let me always avail myself of the duty; the privilege; and be glad when they

say unto me, Let us go up into the House of the Lord.

MARCH 19.—*Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.*"
Deut. xxxii. 7.

THERE is much truth in the proverb, He that will learn of none but himself, is sure to have a fool for *his* master. The way to advance in knowledge, is to be sensible of our own deficiencies, and willing to avail ourselves of assistance. The cause of all errors is pride; for though we are ignorant, and unable to guide ourselves, there is an infallible Instructor, under whose teachings we may place ourselves—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

And there are others that may be subordinately consulted; they possess, and can impart a little of His judgment: for in His light they see light.—The priests' lips should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. And not only ministers, but—private Christians may be useful—yea, and unlearned Christians, and poor and afflicted Christians, who walk much with God, and draw in their irradiations immediately from the Scriptures. Indeed, there is hardly a being, however inferior to ourselves in some respects, but, being better versed in others, can teach us something. A wise man will learn more from a fool, than a fool will learn from a thousand wise men.—The Scripture sends us even to the brute creation: "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee." "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."

But I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. It is true, great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment: yet they must have had many more opportunities for observation and decision than others; and God obviously intended to place some under the tuition of others. We were designed to live in a state of connexion with, and dependence upon each other: and while the old need the strength and activeness of the young, the young need the prudence and counsel of the old. Therefore, says Peter, "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." Nothing can be more offensive in them than self-sufficiency. Surely they must acknowledge, that those who are much older than themselves, have at least the advantage of *experience*, which is commonly the slow growth of time, and is the most valuable of all knowledge. And when young people so often err in the connexions they form, and the steps they take, and the hazards they run; is it not from that self-confidence which deems advice needless? They are not sober-minded: but think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.

But what advantage do we derive from writing and printing! The birds and beasts are no wiser now, than when they went to Noah for shelter, and to Adam for names. It is nearly the same with savage life: knowledge is not preserved, transmitted, and increased, for want of books. But in consequence of these helps, the improvements of one age flow into another, and the stream is continually enlarging by the influx of additional discoveries. By means of them, we can consult the dead, as well as the living: for though dead, they yet speak. And we can hold converse with Bacon, and Boyle; with Luther, and Leighton: and can be *alone* with them; and in their best moments; and when they are most ready to communicate. Yea, by the Scriptures, we can associate with Paul, and Isaiah; with

Moses, and the Patriarchs; and can sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

MARCH 20.—"*Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.*" Ps. lxxxvi. 3.

So David, though a man after God's own heart, and perhaps the greatest proficient in experimental and devotional piety before the coming of Christ, felt *his* need of mercy, and sought it daily—or every day, as it is in the margin. Let us follow his example, and cry daily

— For pardoning mercy. He is ready to forgive, and it is well for us he is. Who can understand his errors? In many things we offend all. What omissions of duty are we chargeable with! If our actions are materially good, how defective are their principle and motive! The sins of our holy things would condemn us. Usher, one of the best as well as one of the greatest of men, therefore said, He hoped to die with the words of the publican in his mouth, God be merciful to me a sinner; and he died pronouncing them. And Paul, after eulogizing Onesiphorus so highly for his good works, adds, "The Lord grant that *he* may find mercy of the Lord in that day"—he, even he, would need mercy —to the last, and, above all—at the last. And where is the man, who, in prospect of *that* day, must not fall upon his knees, and pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified?"

— Let us cry daily for sanctifying mercy. We cannot be in a proper state of mind if we only see the guilt of sin, and not the pollution also: if our fear only be excited, and not our aversion: if we

re concerned to be delivered from the wrath to ome, but not to be "saved by the washing of re- eneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." I want," says the Christian, "true holiness. I want o bear more of the image of the heavenly. I want o be purified even as he is pure."

— Let us cry daily for assisting mercy. What an we do *alone* in our trials and our duties; in ur calling as men, and our vocation as Christians? Ve cannot see to-morrow with the light of to-day; or will our present food yield us future support— e must have fresh supplies of light and of food. nd we must have fresh supplies of the Spirit of esus Christ, to help our infirmities, to renew our trength; and to enable us to adorn the doctrine f God our Saviour in all things. We must live in he Spirit, that we may walk in the Spirit.

— Let us cry daily for preserving mercy. Our eputation, our substance, our business, our health —every thing is exposed; and he is the preserver of nen. But the great thing is the soul. To what angers is not this liable? And he who knows, ot only his perils, but himself, will not only watch, ut pray, lest he enter into temptation. He knows hat God alone can keep him from falling, and that ithout Him he can no more stand than a staff when he hand is withdrawn. And therefore his language ill be, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

— Let us cry daily for providing mercy. He as taught us this—When ye pray, say, Give us day y day our daily bread. Bread signifies sustenance t large: but the word employed is wisely chosen o teach us moderation. We are not to pray for lainties, but to be fed with food convenient for us.)ur necessity, as well as safety, if properly con- ulted, will keep us from seeking great things to urselves. Nature wants but little; and grace, less.

— Let us cry daily for guiding mercy. How nuch depends, not only upon a wrong course, but

even a wrong step! It may give a new character to my condition. It may quarter upon me repentance for life. And the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. What a privilege that He, who cannot err, is as willing as he is able to lead me. To him alone let me repair, and on him alone depend, saying, as the language both of choice and of confidence—*Thou* shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.

Then daily prayer will be turned into ceaseless praise; and I shall sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever.

MARCH 21.—"*The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy.*" Zeph. iii. 17.

IT is obvious, He *can* save—for he is in the *midst* of them, and *mighty*. Here is nearness and power: He is therefore able to save to the uttermost—whatever be the heinousness of guilt, or the depravity of nature, or the extremity of danger, or the depth of distress.

But he *will* save—He is inclined, he is engaged, he is bound by promise, oath, and blood—

— Neither does he repent of the obligation under which he has been pleased to bring himself—neither does he perform the work with reluctance—He will save, he will *rejoice over them with joy*.

— Are they his vineyard? I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Are they his sheep? "The Lord shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: neither shall the beast of the field devour them; but they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods."

But what is this Salvation? It does not exclude temporal preservation and deliverance. He knows

how to deliver the godly out of temptation; so that if he does not find a way, he can easily make one. Thus he saved Joseph from prison; and David from the paw of the lion and the bear, and the uncircumcised Philistine; and Elijah from famine; and Jonah from the belly of hell.

"Blest proofs of power and love divine,
"That meet us in his word;
"May every deep-felt care of mine
"Be trusted with the Lord."

We are not to look for miracles, but we may look for Him who performed them; and who has said, I will be with thee in trouble. He has all events at his control. He is always the same. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. A distinction, however, is to be here observed. Temporal deliverances are promised *conditionally*. He could not have promised *them* otherwise—it would be rather a threatening than a promise, were he to engage to relieve and indulge you, whether it be good for you or evil. And it *might* be evil; and though you may not be aware of it, he can foresee it, and will prevent it. He has therefore said, They that seek the Lord, shall not want any *good* thing. As to your property, he can make a hedge about all that you have. As to your reputation, he can hide you in the secret of his pavilion from the strife of tongues. As to your body, he can keep all your bones so that not one of them shall be broken—and if it be good for you, he will—he must do it: but if it would be otherwise, he will disappoint your wishes and hopes, and make the privation—the privilege.

But as to the *soul!* Ah! what did you mean when you first asked, "What shall I do to be saved?" When you first prayed, "Save me, and I shall be saved?" You thought of nothing earthly then—

but—of redemption from the curse of the Law; of deliverance from the powers of darkness; of freedom from the sting of death; of release from the dominion and being of sin—and it was said unto you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And *this* salvation is insured. *This* salvation is begun. You are already justified by his blood, and saved from wrath through him. You are already renewed in the spirit of your mind. You have already the earnest of your inheritance; and taste some of the grapes of Eshcol. And as to the completion, now is your salvation nearer than when you believed—the night is far spent: the day is at hand.

And what is all beside! well with the soul! well for eternity! a smiling God! an opening heaven!

"A hope so much divine,
"May trials well endure."

MARCH 22.—"*Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*" 1 Peter iv. 12.

ARE we then, before we really suffer, to suffer in imagination; tormenting ourselves with gloomy fears; and embittering present comfort with future apprehension? No. But neither are we to indulge presumption. We are to consider difficulties as well as advantages; and though light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun, yet we are to remember also the days of darkness, for they shall be many. If we do not admit the possibility of disappointment and distress, we shall, when they occur, be dismayed and confounded, and say, If I am his, why am I thus? What is unexpected

is overpowering: it does not leave us, for the time, the use either of reason or religion; and we resemble a soldier, who, while seeking his weapons, gives the enemy an advantage against him. But to be fore-warned, is to be fore-armed: and what we reckon upon in the course of an enterprize, confirms, by the event, the reasonableness of our scheme. The Apostle would not have us to be surprised, or deem it a strange thing, even if our trial should be fiery. A strange thing is a thing unlooked for, and which we had no reason to expect. But is this the case with our afflictions?

—Think of the ordinary state of humanity. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; and is it strange that he should inherit? How numerous and how delicate are the organs of the body! yet they are constantly in use, and in danger. To how many accidents are we exposed! How many seeds of disorder are lodged within us! Every possession makes us capable of loss; every connexion, of bereavement; every enjoyment, of grief; every hope, of fear—the wonder is, that we are ever free.

— Hear the declarations of Scripture: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Through much tribulation you must enter the Kingdom." Are these the true sayings of God?

— Trace the history of His people. However dear to God, or eminent in grace, which of them escaped?

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> "Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown:
> "No traveller e'er reached that bless'd abode,
> "Who found not thorns and briers on the road."

Is this only the language of poetry? "What son is he," asks the Apostle, "whom the father chasteneth not?" "As many as I love," says God, "I rebuke and chasten."

Consider the disposition of the world—"Marvel not if the world hate you." If they hate the Light, they are not likely to love those who diffuse it. The principles and walk of the Christian reproach and condemn, not only the profane, but many who would pass for religious, but who deny the power of godliness, while they have the form. The mere moral and pharisaical are often the bitterest enemies of evangelical piety. The rule was once deemed without exception: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The absence of it now, is owing, not to the want of disposition, but power. Many things restrain it; yet it is restrained only in the degree. The hand is tied, but the tongue is free—and how does it deal with the decided followers of the Lamb? And what is the carnal mind, but enmity against God?

— Survey the Christian's spiritual imperfections and necessities. Without suffering, how can they resemble the Saviour? and be weaned from the world? and be witnesses for God? and be prepared for usefulness? Can the welfare of the year dispense with winter? Is it a strange thing for the husbandman to plough up the fallow ground, to receive the seed? or for the vinedresser to prune the vine? or for the refiner to put his gold into the furnace? Such a needs be is there for all our afflictions: and he only who is ignorant of it, can wonder at the fiery trial.

But, Christian, while you look for it, so as not to be astonished at the experience—remember, you have enough to encourage you. He who died for you, and rose again, and rules over all, has made provision for every condition in which you shall be found. As thy sufferings abound, thy consolation shall abound also. If the way be rough, thy shoes shall be iron and brass: and as thy day, so shall thy strength be—Till the last tear is wiped away, and all shall be peace, and quietness, and assurance for ever.

MARCH 23.—"*I know whom I have believed.*" 2 Tim. i. 12.

—OR trusted, as it is in the margin. And this is better; for the Apostle is referring to an act of confidence rather than of belief; and which was expressed by his entrusting the Saviour with a deposit, or committing his soul into his hands.

The knowledge of which he speaks is not only, or principally, the knowledge he had of the Lord Jesus *before* he believed on him. He had indeed such a knowledge, and he *must* have had; for how can we believe on him of whom we have not heard? Who would commit a jewel to a stranger? Who would walk over a deep abyss without enquiring whether the plank was sound or rotten? Ignorance in such a case would render confidence the act of a fool; whereas faith in Christ is wisdom; and when a man commits his eternal all to Him, he has the highest reason in the world for so doing. This previous knowledge, however, is derived entirely from testimony.

But there is also a subsequent knowledge derived from experience: and he that believeth hath the witness in himself. He knows the bitterness of gall, and the sweetness of honey, not from report, but from taste. My conscience, says he, was burthened, and I found no relief till I applied to the Blood of Sprinkling. Without Him, I can do nothing; but I know that his grace is sufficient for me; for I have made trial of it, both in duty and in distress. I have read and heard much of His excellency: and I have put it to the proof—He is now a tried friend and benefactor. I have tried—much—and often—his power, faithfulness, and care; and have found them trust-worthy. I therefore feel satisfaction in reviewing what I have done. I have often been imposed upon, and have played the fool; but not here. Of many things I have

repented, but the longer I live the less am I disposed to repent of this transaction. I have examined it in the retirement of the closet; in the light of Scripture; in the view of death and eternity; and the more I consider it, the more I approve and glory in the deed. And I will recommend the same to others—and I can speak with the boldness and earnestness of conviction; for I know whom I have believed.

And here we see the value of this knowledge. It increases reliance and confidence. Hence, says David, "They that know thy Name, will put their trust in thee:" *i.e.* they will trust with more ease and more firmness. Whence arise many of the doubts and fears of Christians, but from their living more upon their frames and feelings than upon the clear and full views of the truth as it is in Jesus? As soon as ever you have committed a valuable treasure to any one, you become alive to his character; and unless you are well acquainted with it, every surmising, every loose report, every dark and unexplained circumstance, may trouble and terrify the heart—even though the deposit may be secure. For though the safety of the deposit depends on the goodness of his character, your satisfaction depends upon your knowledge of it.

Let me therefore be concerned to grow in grace; and also—and for this very purpose—in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let me search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of him. Let me attend his House, and the preaching of his Word. Let me converse much with those who have been much with him. Let me earnestly implore the influence of the Holy Spirit, who, says the Saviour, shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you. Paul, after such a length of acquaintance, and such a depth of intimacy, not only said, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord—but that I may know

im and the power of his resurrection, and the fel-
wship of his sufferings, being made conformable
nto his death.

MARCH 24.—"*I will walk in thy truth.*"
Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

VERY resolution expressed by a good man, in a
roper frame of mind, will be founded, not in self-
onfidence, but in dependence on divine grace.
Then it will be useful; it will tend to stimulate, and
o humble; to bring to remembrance, and to bind—
t will be like a hedge, that defends the field; or
ke the hemming, that keeps the robe from raveling
ut.—"I will walk in thy truth," is a noble reso-
ution, and worthy our imitation.

Walking, in the Scripture, takes in the whole of
ur conversation, or conduct: and to walk *in* any
hing, intends a fulness of it. For a man to *walk*
a pride, is something more than to be proud: it
ays, that pride is his way; his element; that he
s wholly under the influence of it.

Four ways we should thus walk in God's truth.

— We should walk in the belief of his truth.
t deserves our credence. It is a faithful saying,
s well as worthy of all acceptation. If we receive
he witness of man, the witness of God is greater.
Men are very tenacious of the honour of their word.
f their veracity be denied, they instantly demand
atisfaction for the insult. How often is God made
liar! How slow of heart are we to believe all
hat the prophets have spoken! Lord, increase our
aith.

— We should walk in the practice of his truth.
This is as necessary as the former, and the evidence

of it; for we are to shew our faith by our works. Faith without works, is as the body without the soul: there is nothing vital or operative in it. The Gospel is a doctrine according to godliness. Every part of it has a practical tendency: and we are required to obey it from the heart. It is well to hear; but hearing is to be viewed in the order of means, and not as an end. Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and *keep it*. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them.

— We should walk in the enjoyment of his truth. For it is not only of a sanctifying, but a consolatory nature: it brings us glad tidings of great joy; it is all written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. If, therefore, our conversation *becometh* the Gospel, it will be happy, as well as holy. Thus it was with the first Christians: they walked, not only in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. They were not free from trouble; but, as the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, the consolation also abounded by Christ. They were not free from complaint and self-abhorrence; but in His Name they rejoiced all the day, and in his righteousness were exalted. Of themselves, they felt they could do nothing, but they were strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and through him they could do all things. They knew not what a day would bring forth; but they were careful for nothing, casting all their care on Him who cared for them. The Gospel did not shut them up in a dungeon of doubts and fears; they knew the truth, and the truth made them free indeed; and they walked in the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

— We should walk in the profession of his truth. If we know the joyful sound, so as to be blessed by it, we shall feel *this* yoke easy, and this burden light. We shall not act to be seen of men; but we shall have no objection that men should see us.

Praise will not draw us out of a corner; and fear will not drive us into one. We shall be willing for all to know that we are not our own, but His who bought us with a price; and that we are not only bound, but determined to glorify him in our bodies and spirits. For his love will constrain us, not only to confess him with the mouth, but with the life (for actions speak louder than words), despising in our eyes a vile person, but honouring them that fear the Lord; attending only where his truth is preached, and his glory is maintained; and going forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

If we are thus governed, we shall be a credit and a comfort to our ministers, who have no greater joy than to hear of their children walking in the truth. We shall hold forth the Word of Life, and cause them to rejoice in the day of Christ, that they have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain. We shall adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. We shall be fellow-helpers to the truth. And the Judge will *graciously* say—"They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

MARCH 25.—"*The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*"
Ps. xxxvii. 18.

EVERY thing here requires attention—

— "The *persons*—"The upright." The upright mean those who are sincere: sincere in their dealings with their fellow-creatures; with their own souls; and with their God. The character is equally rare and excellent. It admits of imperfection, but not of partiality; and is never found separate from the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

— The *period*—"Their days." These are "known

of God." This knowledge being spoken of as a privilege, something more than mere intelligence must be intended: for in this sense, He knows the days of the wicked, as well as of the upright. The meaning is, that he knows them kindly, and graciously; that he feels, and will acknowledge his concern in them; and make them all work together for their good. He knows their number—This is with him. He has appointed it: friends cannot enlarge; enemies cannot reduce it. Whenever they die, they have filled their days, and are immortal till their work is done. He knows the nature of them—and he determines it—

> "If light attends the course they run,
> "'Tis he provides those rays;
> "And 'tis his hand that veils their sun,
> "If darkness clouds their days."

— Have they days of affliction? He knows them: knows their source, their pressure, how long they have continued, the support they require, and the proper time to remove them.—Have they days of danger? He knows them; and will be a refuge and defence in them.—Have they days of duty? He knows them; and will furnish the strength and the help they require.—Have they days of inaction? when they are laid aside from their work, by accident or disease? He knows them; and says to his servants, under every prevention, It is well that it was in thy heart.—Have they days of privation? when they are denied the ordinances of religion, after seeing his power and glory in the temple, and going, with the voice of gladness, to keep holy day? He knows them; and will follow his people when they cannot follow him; and be a little Sanctuary to them in their losses.—Have they days of declension and of age? in which their strength is fled, and their senses fail, and so many of their connexions have gone down to the dust—evil days, wherein they

have no pleasure? He knows them; and says, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth. Even to old age I am He, and to hoar hairs will I bear and carry you.

— The *portion*—"Their inheritance shall be for ever." So was not the inheritance of many of the angels in heaven; for they kept not their first estate. So was not the inheritance of Adam in Paradise; for the Lord drove out the man. So was not the inheritance of the Jew in Canaan; for the glory of all lands was made a desolation. So is not the inheritance of the man of the world. His portion is in this life. And what is this, but a vapour, a shadow! Yet, at the end of it, he is stripped of all, and departs as naked as he came. Yea, and before the close, his hopes and comforts may be all laid bare. For—

> "Short-liv'd as we are, yet our pleasures, we see,
> "Have a much shorter date, and die sooner than we."

And the Christian has not only being, and health, and riches, and honour, and peace, and joy, and friendship—but all these for ever!

Indeed, the more important and valuable the acquisition, the more miserable he would feel if there was any uncertainty in the continuance. The thought of loss, and even of danger, would embitter all. But it is for ever—for ever! Yea, it will be always increasing. After millions of years we shall be singing a new song.

In the world we may have losses, but they cannot affect our estate. I, one day, says Mr. Newton, visited a family that had suffered by a fire, which had destroyed all the house and the goods. I found the pious mistress in tears. I said, I give you joy, madam! Surprised, and ready to be offended, she exclaimed, What! joy that all my property is consumed! No—but I give you joy that you have so

much property that no fire can touch. This turn checked the grief, and she wiped her tears, and smiled like the sun, shining after an April shower. Thus the Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that in Heaven they had a better and an enduring substance.

MARCH 26.—"*And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*" John xiv. 29.

HE refers to what he had said concerning his death, and resurrection; his sufferings, and glory. As nothing befel him by chance, so nothing took him by surprise. All was laid out in his view; and he saw the end from the beginning—and foretold it all before any of it had come to pass. For what purpose? "That, when it is come to pass," says he, "ye might believe."

Hence we see the importance of faith. This is what he always required in those he healed. Only believe, said he to the ruler of the synagogue. He said to his disciples, with regard to the death of Lazarus, "I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." If a man wishes a tree to grow, he waters, not the branches, but the root. Holy tempers and good works are the fruits of religion—Faith is the root; and as this is enlivened, every thing in the divine life prospers. Unbelief makes God a liar; renders the Scripture a nonentity; and leaves the soul open to every sin. But he that believeth shall be saved. Yea, he hath everlasting life. By faith we stand; walk; live. We are justified, we are sanctified, by faith. Faith purifies

the heart, and overcometh the world. Unless we believe, we shsll not be established. We are filled with all joy and peace in believing—We read of the joy of faith, the prayer of faith, the work of faith, the obedience of faith, the fight of faith—every thing is ascribed to it in the Word of God.

— Here we learn, also, that there may be an improvement in faith, where the principle is already found. Did not these disciples believe at this very time? They had been with him from the beginning; they had heard his sayings, and witnessed his miracles, and seen his glory—yes, and they believed on him too—and had left all to follow him. But they did not sufficiently believe. Their faith was too obscure in its views; too feeble in its hold; too powerless in its operation. Are there not, then, degrees in godliness? May there not be a growth in grace? Does not Paul tell the Thessalonians, that their faith grew exceedingly? And how desirable is this progress! The strong in faith have a thousand advantages above the weak. The latter have a heaven hereafter; the former have a heaven here too. And if the Apostles were defective, and said, Lord, increase our faith; what need have we to cry out, with tears, like the father of the child, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

— We remark, also, that one of the best means of increasing and establishing our faith, is to compare the word and the works of the Lord together. This was the help and advantage he would here insure to his disciples: "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." So did the Church in the time of David: "As we have heard, so have we seen in the City of our God." We have heard the promises, and we have seen the fulfilment. We have heard the threatenings, and we have seen the execution. We have heard the doctrine, and we have seen the practice. As soon as Jesus had said, "Go thy way,

thy son liveth," the nobleman "believed, and went his way." "But as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth! Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house." That is, he now believed more firmly and impressively; and this was the consequence of comparison. And thus, facts are yielding us constant and growing evidence of the truth of God's word. Upon this principle, apostates and scoffers do not scandalize us—The Scripture tells us they will come. We read in the Scripture, the way of transgressors is hard: that he who walketh uprightly, walketh surely: that the merciful shall obtain mercy: that the way of the slothful is a hedge of thorns—and how little must he have observed the experience of others, or consulted his own, who is not every day more convinced of this!

— Finally: Does not this clearly intimate, that the benefit to be derived from prophecy is subsequent to its accomplishment? "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." He mentions the same thing in several other places; and we are informed, in more than one instance, of the result. Thus we read—"When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." So, also, when they had witnessed his "zeal" in purifying the temple, "his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Thus we see our remark justified. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? Where is the evidence of the truth of prophecy before it come to pass? You say, a God who cannot lie has spoken it. But God himself does not demand

ur faith on the announcement, but on the event. nd how little can it be understood beforehand; nless as to its general bearings! A definite and articular acquaintance with the contents of divine redictions, would derange the order of Providence, nd in many cases hinder the effect. Had this fact een duly considered, much time and attention would ave been more profitably employed, than in attempts o open the seals, and blow the trumpets, and pour ut the vials of the Apocalypse. There is no prophet mong us, nor any that telleth how long; yet there re, as Fuller calls them, "fortune-tellers of the hurch." Pastors have been drawn away from their roper work — And "the hungry sheep look up, nd are not fed" — And sinners are not converted rom the error of their ways. For even allowing the iews advanced with so much presumption to be just nd true, they are not repentance towards God, and aith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. "Him cru- ified," the Apostles preached—and determined to now nothing else.

It is not for us to know the times, or the sea- ons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Ie has entrusted us with his commands; but not rith his decrees. "The secret things belong unto he Lord our God; but those things which are re- ealed belong unto us and our children for ever, hat we may do all the words of this law."

MARCH 27.—"*He hath done all things well.*" Mark vii. 37.

l great commendation; but deserved. Human xcellencies are rare and individual. One man does ne thing well; another does another thing well— ut He does *all* things well. The little men do

well, is only *comparatively* well; all He does, is *absolutely* so. And this will appear, whether we consider him as the Creator—and survey the works of Nature: or as the Saviour—and contemplate the wonders of grace: or as the Governor—and examine the dispensations of his Providence.

We have some fine specimens of his agency recorded in the Scripture. Take, for instance, the history of Joseph. Read it over again and again: and then ask, Could any link in this chain, any stone in this structure have been omitted? In this achievement, could any thing have been added to the plan, or the execution? From a part, we may estimate the whole. And what applies to his dealings with others, will apply to his dealings with us; for all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth.

— But whence, then, is it, that we cannot really and readily, with regard to his concern in our affairs, and especially those of a trying nature, adopt the acknowledgment, and say, He hath done all things well?

— The reason is, we judge *atheistically*. Every unregenerate sinner lives without God in the world. But does a Christian? Is not he made to differ from others; and from himself? He is. Yet his sanctification is not complete. Something is left in him of all the old kinds of leaven; and therefore something of this atheism. He is in a good frame when, with Eli, he can say, of whatever befals him, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." But he does not always see Him. He sometimes stops at the instrumentality employed—"Oh! it was that unlucky accident; it was that heedless servant; it was that perfidious neighbour; it was that cruel enemy."—No wonder *He* does not *all* things well, when he is not acknowledged as doing *any* thing.

— We judge *selfishly*. We are not to view ourselves as detached individuals. We are parts of a whole; and variously connected with others. What

is not good for us personally, may be good for us relatively. Suppose a trying dispensation makes us more tender and compassionate towards our fellow-creatures and our fellow Christians; suppose a distressing experience gives us the tongue of the learned, and enables us to speak a word in season to him that is weary: suppose, as witnesses and examples of the power and excellency of the Gospel, we arouse the careless, and confirm the wavering: is there not enough here to call for our resignation and praise? Ezekiel was deprived of the desire of his eyes, with a stroke: to himself, this was painful; but it was profitable to his ministry, and useful to his charge—and this was the design of it. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

— We judge *carnally*. What is not pleasing may yet be beneficial: and natural evil may be moral good. When things are agreeable to our wishes, we never think of any difficulty in the Divine proceedings. While we have ease, and health, and friends, and success in business, we never complain of the darkness of Providence. But as soon as there is any reverse, O then we groan out, "His way is in the sea, his path in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known"—as if every thing was to be estimated by our accommodation and convenience—as if God acted wisely or unwisely, righteously or unrighteously, just as his doings affect us—and affect, too, not our best interests, but our present and temporal! Is it wonderful that we, who deserve stripes, should feel the rod? that we who need correction, should meet with chastisement? Is it mysterious that the vine should be pruned? the ground ploughed? the gold tried in the fire? If the child now thinks certain restraints, and privations, and rebukes to which the father subjects him, needless and harsh, he will more than approve of them when he comes to years of maturity.

— We judge *prematurely*. He that believeth

maketh not haste. It is good for a man not only to hope, but quietly wait for the salvation of God; and one reason is, because it will prevent a wrong conclusion. Therefore says the Apostle, judge nothing before the time until the Lord come. You would not judge of the abilities of the limner from the unfinished sketch, but you would wait till the canvas had received the last touches of his masterly pencil. You would not judge of the perfection of a building from the digging of the foundation, and the coarse materials lying in a kind of disorder all around; especially if you had never seen the plan or the model: but you would stay till the parts were all put together in their places, and the top-stone brought forth with shouting—Let us stay till God has done. What I do, says he, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Then every thing will speak for itself. Then we shall walk, not by faith, but by sight. Then we shall see what we now believe; and for ever acknowledge, "He is the rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right, is he."

MARCH 28.—"*Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*" John xiv. 30.

THERE are many talkers—profane talkers—indecent talkers—foolish talkers—vain talkers. And there are some who are wise and good talkers; their lips are as a well-spring of life. But *He* was perfectly wise and good—Oh! to have heard him "talk!" The term is applied to his more public teaching—"While *he* yet talked to the people." And had some of his

ministers spoken more in a familiar and conversational mode, then they would have resembled him more; and the poor would have had the Gospel preached unto them; and the common people would have heard him gladly; and the children would have cried Hosanna.

It is here intimated that he *had* talked "much" with them. He was never reserved. If he kept back any thing from them, it was because they could not at the time bear it. He treated them not as servants, but friends; for all things that he had heard of the Father he made known unto them. He always instructed, and reproved, and encouraged them, as the occasion required. He seized every opportunity for religious discourse, and levied a tax of spiritual profit upon every natural object or providential occurrence. He could not see a sower going forth to sow, or a fisherman dragging his net, or a woman drawing water, but he derived from it a parable or an illustration—Teaching his followers to be social and communicative in divine things; and, for this purpose, to cultivate their understanding; and to be filled with the Spirit. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. How can much religious discourse be expected from those who have so little of the life of God in them? If, for the sake of consistency, they sometimes make the attempt, it must be a task; and they will soon drop into what is more natural to them, a conversation empty as the wind, and barren as the sand.

— But "hereafter" he *would* not talk much with them—not from disinclination, but for want of intercourse. Their opportunities would soon be over—for he was going to leave them. With regard also to us—it is probable as to some—and certain as to others, that we have heard and read much more than we ever shall read or hear in future. Yet a little while is the light with us.

The way in which he refers to his removal from them by his suffering and death is remarkable—"For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

He marks, first, the character of his adversary—the prince of this world. He is not so by right, but usurpation; and by God's allowing him power over those who provoke him. When the traitor had received the sop—then Satan entered into him. He was in him before; but his agency was under restraints. These restraints were then all taken away; and the Devil had his victim entirely to himself. Israel would have none of him—so he gave them up to their own hearts' lust. All who walk according to the course of this world, walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. They may imagine themselves to be free, and many of them make a figure in the eye of sense; but faith sees them taken captive by the Devil at his will; and held in the vilest subjection—he is their prince—yea, according to the Apostle, he is the god of this world; and in reality they not only obey, but worship him.

— Secondly, he sees his approach: "He cometh." Not personally—so he had come to him in the wilderness and been foiled; but in his instruments. In Judas that betrayed him; in Peter that denied him; in his disciples that forsook him and fled; in Herod that threatened him; in Pilate that condemned him; in the Jews that clamoured for his blood; and in the Romans that shed it. "One of you," says our Lord, "is a devil"—he gives him the name, because he bore his image, and did his work. "The Devil," we read, "shall cast some of you into prison." Is the Devil a justice of the peace? No; but if he acts unrighteously and cruelly, the justice of peace is the Devil. The Devil is not Voltaire; but, by poisoning and destroying the souls

of men, Voltaire is the Devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth.

— Thirdly, he is confident of the result of the conflict: "And hath nothing in me." He has enough in us.—First, enough of guilt. Hence he can alarm and dismay us. In the conscience of some he produces such terror and anguish, that the man chooses strangling and death rather than life. He is also the accuser of the brethren; and in their sins, and the sins even of their holy things, he finds enough against them, to perplex and distress them in their afflictions, and in their approaches to God. But he could find no guilt in Jesus; and therefore he could stir up no feeling of self-remorse or despair.—Secondly, enough of corruption. Hence he can easily draw us aside by laying hold of our envy, pride, avarice, impatience. Owing to the remains of unmortified passions, or, as the Apostle calls it, the sin that dwelleth in us, we are always in danger from outward things. We may be ensnared by our dress, our table, our business, and our friends: what is innocent and good in itself may become to us injurious and evil. Here the sparks fall upon tinder. But there was nothing inflammable in him; and therefore no unhallowed fire could be kindled. He was the Holy One of God. "He *did* no sin," and "in him *was* no sin!"

— A proof that if he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

— We also see that there must be a great difference between him and ourselves, as to moral danger. He was safe every where, and in all circumstances. We must watch and pray, lest we enter

into temptation—The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

MARCH 29.—"*God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*"
1 Thess. v. 9.

— No: "He has not appointed us to wrath." He might have done it. We deserved it; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But He has delivered us *from* the wrath to come. We have trials, but there is no curse in them. They come from a father who corrects, not from a judge who punishes. We may sometimes fear his wrath, but this is our infirmity. Flesh cries, Do not condemn me: but faith cries, There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

— But "to obtain salvation." We are often said to be saved already. We are so, as to our state; but not as to possession and enjoyment. This is a future blessedness. It is, indeed, begun here: but that which is held up to the hope of the believer, is the accomplishment of all that God has promised—the reception of the soul at death; the resurrection of the body at the last day; the glorification of the whole man for ever. Oh! what an object of expectation! How poor and pitiful is every thing seen and temporal, compared with this! Some are destined to shine in courts; some to stride over the heads of others; some to amass heaps of shining ore—but, if a Christian, thou art destined to an inheritance beyond the skies, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away. What is life? However indulged and endowed, it is, at its best estate, altogether vanity! What are the pleasures of sin—for a season! What are riches and—death! a title

and—damnation at the end of it! And what are losses and afflictions to a man who is going to obtain SALVATION!

But by what medium will he acquire it?—"Through our Lord Jesus Christ." To seek it in any other way, is a vain pursuit. There is salvation in none other. I am the way, said he, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. Yea, it is not only useless, but sinful. It opposes God's revealed will and express command: it robs the Lord Jesus of his highest glory; it frustrates his grace, and makes him to be dead in vain. Much comes to some, *through* others. We have had friends and benefactors—but, after all, what have they done for us? What self-denial have they exercised? What sufferings have they endured? But *he* knew what would be required of him in opening for us a passage to glory. Yet he readily consented, and said, Lo! I come. Behold, and see if ever there was sorrow or love like his—He became poor, that we might be made rich. He died, that we might live.

The Apostle does not forget to tell us, that we are *appointed* to obtain this salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. As men, we are not the creatures of chance. There is an appointed time to man upon earth; and he has appointed the bounds of our habitation. And, as Christians, are we the offspring of contingency? Is conversion a happy accident? It is the work of God; and he does nothing without foreknowledge and design. Four things may be observed, with regard to this appointment. The *earliness* of it—in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.—The *freeness* of it—it was not founded on the foresight of any worthiness or works of ours—He hath saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world

began.—Its *efficiency*—it will not, cannot fail—the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."—Its *appropriation*—blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Go back from effects to causes. Prove your calling, and thus make your election sure.

And remember one thing—be simple, and receive the kingdom of God as a little child, not only as to doctrines, but as to its invitations and promises. The writer, one day, attended the dying bed of a young female. I have little, said she, to relate, as to my experience. I have been much tried and tempted—but this is my sheet-anchor—He has said, Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. I know I come to him—and I expect that he will be as good as his word. Poor and unworthy as I am, he will not trifle with me, or deceive me—It would be beneath his greatness, as well as his goodness. I am at his feet; and you have often said—

"'Tis joy enough, my all in all,
"At thy dear feet to lie;
"Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
"And none can higher fly."

MARCH 30.—"*When they saw him, they besought him that he would depart.*" Matt. viii. 34.

HE had now entered the country of the Gadarenes, and cured two demoniacs. The people should have *deemed* themselves honoured by his presence; and

have thanked him for relieving their wretched neighbours from the most dreadful malady. But he had, in correction of an unlawful traffic, destroyed their swine. They, therefore, preferring their sins to their souls, feared and hated him, and—desired him to withdraw. He took them immediately at their word—and went—and returned no more. Oh! when he comes to us, and convinces us of sin, and reproves us for our evil passions and vile courses; when he comes and makes us uneasy, by the admonitions of conscience, of friendship, of Scripture, of Providence; and instead of yielding to his merciful design, we regard him as an irksome intruder, and entreat him (and he hears our meaning without speech) to leave us—he will comply with our desire—and say, They are joined to idols, let them alone—and woe unto them when I depart from them! This is an awful truth—

But it is an equally pleasing one, that if we desire his *presence*, he will indulge our wish. And, therefore, when the two disciples, going to Emmaus, reached the village whither they went, and he made as if he would have gone farther; they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. And, it is said, he went in to tarry with them. So when the woman of Samaria had persuaded many of her neighbours to come to the well to see him; they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

Saviour Jesus! cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Thou art all in all. Come and dwell in our country—Come and dwell in our Churches—Come and dwell in our houses—Come and dwell in our hearts for ever!

"I cannot bear thine absence, Lord;
"My life expires if thou depart:
"Be thou, my heart, still near my God,
"And Thou, my God, be near my heart."

MARCH 31.—"*But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*"
John xiv. 31.

WHEN he says, "Arise, let us go hence"—he shews his readiness to suffer. "I will not wait for the enemy; I will go and meet him. I will go to the place where Judas will look for me. I will go to the garden of Gethsemane, where I am to agonize—and from thence to Calvary, where I am to die. I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" We always see in him this disposition—a proof that he was not compelled to engage; that he did not undertake the case from ignorance; that he did not repent of his work, even in the sight of enduring all its expensiveness of woe—He loved us, and gave himself for us.

Yet this alacrity was not rashness, but obedience—"As the Father gave me commandment." Though in his higher character he had the disposal of himself; in his human nature, and in his mediatorial office, he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *He* felt no inconsistency in this, and why should we? No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again—This commandment have I received of my Father. So mistaken should we be in supposing that the Father was less disposed to save us than the Son, or that his love was purchased by that death which was really the effect of it, and designed to be the medium through which it should operate. Herein God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. And therefore did the Father love him because he laid down his life that he might take it again: and for the suffering of death, he crowned him with glory and honour.

— Though there was something here peculiar in ır Saviour's obedience, there is something also ɛemplary in it. He did not expose himself *before* s hour was come; but cheerfully submitted to the ivine will, when it *was* come. So we are not to ırn aside in search of trials, but to take up our oss when it is fairly in our way. We are not) be impatient to suffer; but when we are called) it, the *call* should bear us up, and bear us ırough, for God is with us.

And this obedience resulted from love—"I love ıe Father." I delight, said he, to do thy will; ea, thy law is within my heart. My meat is to ɒ the will of him that sent me, and to finish his ork. His people, in their measure and degree, ın say the same. As obedience is the best evi- ence of love, so love is the best spring of obedience. ; is love that makes it pleasant to ourselves. It is ve that makes it acceptable to God. With him, ɔthing can be a substitute for it. Indeed, we our- ɛlves, in the conduct of our fellow-creatures towards ɜ, judge not by the bulk of the action, but the dis- ɔsition from which it proceeds. The estimate is ken, not from the service, but the principle; not om what is given, but from what is implied. he smallest donation is welcomed as a token of adial regard; while, like God, we abhor "the ıcrifice where not the heart is found."

Jesus would have all this known, not to his sciples only, but to others—and to all: "But that ıe *world* may *know* that I love the Father; and ı the Father gave me commandment, even so I ɔ. Arise, let us go hence." And the world ought ı know it—and in due time will know it. They ɛ deeply concerned in it. At present a very rge majority of mankind have never heard of his ame, or of his salvation. But his cause is spread- g. The Scriptures are entering all languages. issionaries are visiting all climes. The Church

is praying that his Word may have free course and be glorified. And God has said, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." It must therefore by-and-by be said, without a figure, "Behold! the world is gone away after him."

But blessed are our eyes, for they see, and our ears, for they hear. We already know these things. But *how* do we know them? Do we feel as well as understand them? Are we like a December's night, as cold as we are clear? Shall we be found in the number of those who behold, and wonder, and perish? Or, filled with admiration, and gratitude, and confidence, and zeal, are we, beholding as in a glass his glory, changing into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord?

APRIL 1.—"*His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*" Luke xxii. 44.

IT is a question whether this sweat was blood comparatively, *i. e.* whether it resembled blood whose drops are denser, heavier, and larger, than those of common perspiration—or really blood. The latter is possible. There have been instances of the kind, well authenticated. Such an opinion early and generally prevailed; and nothing was more common among the Fathers, than to consider this, as one of the times when he bled for us, each of his pores as a kind of wound, flowing with that blood without which there is no remission. It is, perhaps, impossible

to determine this, absolutely. But even allowing—what we by no means consider as proved—that it was only blood in resemblance; it must have been most extraordinary. For he was abroad in the open air; upon the cold ground; the night far advanced; and the weather chilling—for the High Priest's servants made a fire to warm themselves—here was enough to have checked perspiration—yet his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground!

And what could have caused it? Surely not the mere circumstances of dying. Socrates—Seneca—did not sweat thus; they were cool and calm. Look at the martyrs; and even those of the more timid sex: they were tranquil in the prospect, and in many instances came forth from prison smiling, and blessed the instrument of death—Yes: but they had not to contend with the powers of darkness: but this was their hour, and the power of darkness. They had not to bear the sins of others, nor yet their own; whereas, the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.

We indulge here no curious speculations; and we require the definitions of no human creeds: but neither will we be reasoned out of the plain language and meaning of the Scriptures. We believe God; and not as some believe him; *i.e.*, as a jury in a court believe the testimony of a suspected, a discredited witness, relying no further upon his deposition than it is collaterally supported; and thus yielding no honour to himself—We do not found our belief on knowledge; but derive our knowledge from belief. We believe in the unerring wisdom and veracity of God—and he has told us, that Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust: that he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows: that the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and that by his stripes we are healed.

Men think lightly of sin; but an awakened conscience feels it a burden too heavy to bear. It

as made the whole creation groan. But see Jesus bearing it in his own body—and his sweat falls as great drops of blood down to the ground! What, then, if you should bear it in your own person, O sinner!—Why it will sink thee to the lowest hell. But bear it you must, if you reject or neglect him; for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin—He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son of God, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. But,

> "Each purple drop proclaims there 's room,
> "And bids the poor and needy come."

Oh! let me look on him who suffers thus. Oh! let me mourn over my sins, which caused his anguish—

> "'Twere you that pull'd the vengeance down
> "Upon his guiltless head;
> "Break, break, my heart; and burst, my eyes;
> "And let my sorrows bleed!"

But let me also rejoice. That bloody sweat proclaims my discharge from condemnation, and tells me the Law is magnified and made honourable.

And can I help loving him? Love begets love. And what can evince love like suffering? And such suffering! and for such criminals! and not only without their desert, but their desire!—Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?

April 2.—"*Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.*"
John xviii. 7.

Every thing here is remarkable.

— In the very family of Jesus, how wonderful that any should be base enough to betray him! But

here we find Judas, who had been called to the Apostleship, and invested with power to work miracles, and a few hours before had partaken of the Holy Supper, heading a band of men and officers, which he had obtained from the Chief Priests and Pharisees; and betraying his Master and Benefactor into their hands, with a kiss!

— How wonderful was the courage of Jesus, that, though he knew all things that should come upon him, not only remained in the place, but came forth from the retreat, and presented himself!—This was the effect of a love stronger than death. Perfect love casteth out fear.

— How wonderful was the rebuke, and the repulse, which his enemies met with! No sooner did he pronounce the words, "I am he," than they went backward, and fell to the ground. Whether some rays of glory broke from his sacred body, or whether he immediately by his power impressed their minds, we know not; but, surely, here was enough to induce them to discontinue the unhallowed enterprise.

— Yet—how wonderful, that in a few moments they rise, and recover heart enough to approach him a second time—So that he asks them *again*, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. This was partly the influence of numbers. A man alone may be often easily deterred from an evil action. But it is otherwise where hand joins in hand, and the sinner is seen and supported, and stimulated or reproached, by his fellow-creatures—It shews us, also, the hardening nature of sin. When the men of Sodom were smitten with blindness, they even then groped by the wall to find the house where the heavenly visitants were. Upon the removal of each plague, when Pharaoh saw there was respite, he hardened his heart. And Ahaz, in his affliction, sinned yet more and more against God. And of how many may it be said, "Thou hast stricken

them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return!"

— Neither means, nor even miracles, will avail, when God leaves a man to himself. Persons often think, that a dreadful event will do what ordinances have failed to accomplish. But we have known many who have been stripped, and reduced; and yet their minds have not been humbled before God. They have resembled fractions of ice, or stone; broken, but not changed; each piece retaining the coldness and hardness of the mass. They think that a spectre would be much more efficacious than a preacher—Vain hope! If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

O thou God of all grace, fulfil in my experience the promise—"A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

APRIL 3.—"*Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.*" John xviii. 8.

HERE we see the Saviour's readiness to suffer. He makes not the least attempt to escape from the hands of his enemies; but tells them a second time that he was the victim they sought after; and yielded himself up to be bound, and led away with-

out murmuring or complaint. This willingness was magnified—by the greatness of his sufferings—his knowledge of all he was to endure—his deserving it not, but bearing it for others—and his power of escape.

Here we see his tenderness towards his disciples. He would not have them die or suffer; or at present, even be apprehended and alarmed. They were unable to bear it: they could not follow him now. He has the same heart still, and from this instance of his conduct, we may conclude—That he will suffer no affliction to befal his disciples unless for some wise and useful purpose—That he will sympathize with them in their suffering—That he will afford them support and comfort—and in due time wipe away all their tears.

Here also we see his authority and dominion over their adversaries. We are mistaken if we suppose that he presented a request, when he said, If ye seek me, let these go their way. A request would have been nothing in the present state of their minds, and provided, as they were, with officers and an armed band of Roman soldiers. It was in the nature and force of a command. It was an absolute injunction. "I will not surrender unless these are allowed to depart. You shall not touch a hair of their head." Accordingly they make not the least objection, and suffer them to retire unmolested.

This was in character with his whole history. In his penury he always displayed his riches; in his deepest abasement he emitted rays of his glory —The manhood was seen; but it was, so to speak, deified humanity. What majesty was combined with the humiliations of his birth—and of his death! Does he here submit? It is a conqueror, demanding his own terms, and obtaining them.

And did not this serve to enhance the sin of his disciples in denying and forsaking him? They

were overcome by the fear of man. But what had they to fear? Did they not here see that their enemies were under his control; and could do nothing without his permission? Did he not here obtain for them a passport, insuring their escape and safety? Yet they have not courage and confidence enough to declare themselves on his side, and to stand by him.

And do we not resemble them? How often do we shrink back from the avowal of our principles, or turn aside from the performance of some trying duty? And wherefore? We also yield to the fear of man that bringeth a snare. Yet what can man do unto us? or what can devils do? Satan could not sift Peter, nor touch an article of Job's estate, till leave was granted him. Our foes are all chained; and the extent of their reach is determined by the pleasure of him who loved us well enough to die for us. If he careth for us, it is enough.

When shall we realize this, and go on our way rejoicing? If he says to events, Let that man succeed in his calling; opposition and difficulties are nothing—he gets forward: the blessing of the Lord maketh rich. If he says to sickness, Touch not that individual; the pestilence may walk in darkness, and the destruction rage at noon-day: a thousand may fall at his right side, and ten thousand at his right hand—it shall not come nigh him. If he has any thing more for us to do or suffer, though life be holden by a rotten thread, that thread is more than cable—we are immortal till our change come.

"Hast thou not given thy word
"To save my soul from death?
"And I can trust my Lord
"To keep my mortal breath.
"I'll go and come,
"Nor fear to die,
"'Till from on high
"Thou call me home."

APRIL 4.—"*Christ died for us.*" Rom. v. 8.

So have many. All those who have paid their lives to the injured laws of their country have died for us; and if we derive not improvement from it, the fault is our own. The world drowned in the Deluge, perished for us. The Jews, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, suffered, as the Apostle tells us, as ensamples and admonitions to us. We have buried friends and relations; but

"For us they languish, and for us they die."

That husband of *her* youth; that wife of *his* bosom; that child of *their* love—have been removed, to wean their hearts from earth, and to shew how frail *they* are.—But are we going to rank the death of Christ with such deaths as these? We would rather class it with that of an Apostle: "If I be offered," says Paul to the Philippians, "upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you." This was noble. But was Paul crucified for us?

— No—"It is *Christ* that died"—*His* death is peculiar and pre-eminent—infinitely peculiar and pre-eminent. This was indicated by the prodigies that attended it. But on these we shall not enlarge. Neither shall we dwell on the many touching circumstances of his death. Such a tragical representation may be derived from the history, as would draw tears from every eye, while the heart may be unaffected with, and the mind even uninformed of, the grand design of his death. What was *this?*

Some tell us, that it was to confirm the truth of his doctrine, by the testimony of his blood; and to suffer, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. Now this is true; and we believe it as fully as those who will go no further: but the question is, whether this be the whole, or the principal part of the design. We appeal to the Scriptures—There we learn, that He died for us, as an

expiation of our guilt, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. There we see, that He died for us as a sacrifice, a ransom, a substitute—that He redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us—that He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.

— Exclude this, and the language of the Bible becomes perfectly embarrassing and unintelligible. Exclude this, and what becomes of the legal sacrifices? They were shadows without a substance: they prefigured nothing—for there is no relation between them and his death, as he was a martyr, and an example: but there is a full conformity between them and his death, as he was an atonement. Exclude this, and how are his sufferings to be accounted for at all?—for he did not die for the sins of others, and he had none of his own. Where, then, is the God of judgment? That be far from Him, to do after this manner; to slay the righteous with the wicked. So far the Jews reasoned well: they rejected him, for they considered him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. And so he was: but "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Exclude this, and with what can we meet the conscience, burdened with guilt? With what can we answer the inquiry, How shall I come before the Lord? With what shall we wipe the tear of godly grief? But we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow. His death was an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour. The all-sufficiency, and the acceptableness, were evinced, by his discharge from the grave, and his being

received up into glory. There, within the veil, our hope finds anchorage—

"Jesus, my great High Priest,
"Offer'd his blood, and died;
"My guilty conscience seeks
"No sacrifice beside:
"His powerful blood did once atone,
"And now it pleads before the throne."

But even this is not all the design. Christ died for us, not only to reconcile, but to renovate; not only to justify, but to sanctify. The one is as necessary to our recovery as the other. And both equally flow from the Cross. For he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

"Oh! the sweet wonders of that Cross,
"Where God, my Saviour, groan'd and died!
"My noblest life her spirit draws
"From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

APRIL 5.—"*He was buried.*" 1 Cor. xv. 4.

THE resurrection of our Saviour necessarily pre-supposes his death, but not his burial. His burial was an additional thing; and, as his flesh could not see corruption, *seemed* an unnecessary one—But it is worthy of our notice.

Who begged his body for interment? It was Joseph and Nicodemus. And, here, can we help remarking these petitioners themselves? Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called—but these men were of distinguished rank and condition in life. A few of these there have been in every age of the Church; sufficient—to shew, not that the cause of God depends upon *them*, but to redeem religion from the preju-

dice, that it suits the vulgar only; and also to prove the power of divine grace, in counteracting temptation. But, down to this period, Joseph and Nicodemus had not been persons of much promise: so far from it, they were ashamed and afraid to have their regard to our Lord known, when his disciples were professing their resolution to follow him to prison, and to death. Behold the change! The latter, in the hour of trial, forsake him, and flee: the former come, and openly acknowledge him. Let us all seek after more grace; but let none trust in themselves, or despise others. "The strong may be as tow;" and "the feeble may be as David." The man, of whom we now think nothing, may acquire confidence and zeal; and not only pass us in the road, but leave us very far behind in attainments, and usefulness. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

— Who attended as mourners? "The women, also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid." With us, some days elapse before interment; but here, only two hours were allowed between his execution and his burial. If, indeed, his body had not been implored by Joseph and Nicodemus, it would have been interred at Golgotha—thrown into a hole, dug under the cross.

— Who carried the sacred corpse, we know not; but they had not far to bear it—"for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." This was not a grave of earth, but of stone; and hewn out of a rock. Thus there was only one avenue leading to it; no one, therefore, could approach it from the sides, or behind; and the entrance was watched, guarded, and sealed. It was also a new tomb, in which never man was laid. And here, again, we see the hand of God: for had there been other bodies, some would have

retended collusion, and the evidence could not have een so simple and complete as it now was, when ıe body lay alone there. Finally; it was not his wn. His followers are mad after the honours and ches of the world; but, living and dying, he had ot where to lay his head. He was born in another ıan's house, and was buried in another man's grave.

— But why was he buried at all? First. His urial was an additional confirmation of his death, pon which every thing depended. An examina- on was made while he was upon the cross; and nding him dead already, they brake not his legs; ut a soldier pierced his side, and forthwith came ıereout blood and water—But now his mouth, and ostrils, and ears were all filled with the odours and pices—and who can question a man's death when e is buried? Secondly. It was the completion of is humiliation. "They have brought me into the ust of death." Now that he ascended, what is it ut that he descended first into the lowest parts of he earth? Thirdly. By this he sanctified the rave, and prepared it for his people. They would ave been afraid to go in, but he entered it before hem. They can lie in his bed, after him. He has reed it from every horror. He has softened it, and ıade it easy for them.

— "And there was Mary Magdalene, and the ther Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre." et us sit by them, and contemplate. *There* lies ı that rock, He who made it. *There* are sealed p, the lips which said, Come unto me, all ye that ıbour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. *There* are closed, the eyes which always beamed ompassion; and wept for human woe. *There*, cold, re the hands which were laid on little children, o bless them, and that delivered the widow's son o his mother. *There* lies, the life of the world; nd the hope of Israel. He was fairer than the hildren of men—He was the image of the invisible

God—He went about doing good—He was rich, and, for our sakes, became poor—

"Come, saints, and drop a tear or two,
"For Him who groan'd beneath your load:
"He shed a thousand drops for you,
"A thousand drops of richer blood."

On the tombs of mortals, however illustrious, the humbling sentence is inscribed, "Here he *lies*." But I hear the angel saying, "Come, see the place where the Lord *lay*." He *was* dead—but is alive again—and because He lives, we shall live also—

"Break off your tears, ye saints, and tell
"How high your great Deliv'rer reigns;
"Sing, how he spoil'd the hosts of hell,
"And led the monster, Death, in chains.
"Say—"Live for ever, wondrous King!
"Born to redeem, and strong to save.
"Then ask the monster, Where 's thy sting?
"And where 's thy victory, boasting grave?"

April 6.—"*After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present; but some are fallen asleep.*" 1 Cor. xv. 6.

As the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour is of such unspeakable importance, it cannot be too clearly, and fully ascertained. Now the way to prove a fact, is to call in evidence: and if, in the mouth of two or or three witnesses, every word shall be established—what shall we say, when we meet with such a cloud of witnesses as the Apostle here brings forward?—witnesses the most competent—eye-witnesses; ear-

es; witnesses who even handled the Word
—men, not of hasty credence, but slow of
o believe; men, whose despondence was only
done away, by proof the most undeniable, and
hich they hazarded every thing dear to them;
ved reproach, and suffering, and death.
This interview took place in Galilee, where
d had principally resided, and preached, and
s wonderful works. There he was best known,
iefly followed. Before his death, he had said,
I am risen again, I will go before you into
." On the morning of his resurrection, we
e angel knew of this design; and, therefore,
g the women, he said, "Go quickly and tell his
s, that he is risen from the dead; and behold,
h before you into Galilee, there shall ye see
o! I have told you." Influenced by this au-
, "the eleven disciples went away into Galilee,
mountain where Jesus had appointed them."
whence it appears, that the very spot had been
. And, from the words of the Apostle, it is
that the disciples did not repair to it alone;
ving made known among their connexions the
ching interview with a risen Saviour, they
d the privilege, in company with this large
ly. "He was seen of above five hundred
n at once; of whom the greater part remain
is present; but some are fallen asleep"—Every
here is striking.
e *name*—"Brethren." O, lovely distinction!
will it swallow up every other? When shall
ligious world remember, that all real Chris-
notwithstanding their differences, are all justi-
the same blood; sanctified by the same grace;
ng the same way; heirs of the same glory;
n of the same Father, of whom the whole
in heaven and earth is named?
e *number*—"Above five hundred." We were
ware that he had so many adherents. In

Jerusalem they could only bring together one hundred and twenty. But there were more in the country. Let us not judge of our Lord's followers by a particular place, or party. Let us remember, that he has his hidden ones, whom circumstances may never bring to our notice. How surprised should we be, if any event was to draw them together from their various retreats—"These, where have they been?"—What a multitude, then, which no man can number, will there be, when they shall be all assembled, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues!

The *ravages of time*—"Some have fallen asleep." And no wonder, in the lapse of six-and-twenty years. Who has not, during such a period, been summoned to the grave, to weep there? Whose heart within him has not been desolate, at the loss of friends and relations? Even the Church has not been a Sanctuary from the robber and spoiler. The wise, and the good; the holy, and the useful: the followers and witnesses of the Redeemer, have finished their course, and their testimony, and have slept the sleep of death.

Distinguished preservations—"The greater part remain unto this present"—The majority of five hundred spared so many years!—when, from the numberless perils of life, it was marvellous that any *one* of them should have lived even a *week*, or a *day!* Have we survived others? Let us not ascribe it to our own care; or the goodness of our constitution; but say, with Caleb, when so many carcasses fell in the Wilderness, "The Lord hath kept me alive."

And let us be concerned, that protracted life be devoted to Him, who is "the length of our days," and "the God of our salvation."

APRIL 7.—"*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" Ps. xvi. 10, 11.

OUR Lord tells us of many things concerning himself, not only in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, but in the Psalms. Some have contended, that he is immediately regarded in every passage. This error, arising from a noble truth carried too far, has led the holders of it to take liberties with the translation, and with the original, too. We may safely follow the applications of the Holy Ghost; and we are sure, from the language of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, that, in the words before us, David speaks of the Messiah, or rather introduces the Messiah himself as the speaker.

Jesus knew that he was to suffer, and die; but he knew, also, that death could not feed upon him. He knew he should be laid in the grave; but he knew, also, that he should not remain there—Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.—Hell, here, does not mean the place of the miserable, but the abode of the dead. This he entered; but continued not long enough there for dissolution to commence: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

The path of life was his passage from the sepulchre to glory; from the tomb of Joseph to the Palace of the Great King. This path no one had yet trodden. Enoch, and Elias, had entered heaven, but did not go thither from the grave. Thousands had entered heaven, but left their bodies behind. But He did not leave his. He is therefore called, the first-born from the dead, because he was the first that entered heaven after lying in the grave. He was the first-born, too, in the dignity and influence of the life he realized. Lazarus, and the widow of

Nain's son, and others, though they were revived, died again. But he, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. He lives as no one else ever lived, or ever will live. He lives, having the keys of hell and of death. He lives in the possession of all power in heaven and in earth. He lives as our Head and Representative; as the source of all spiritual influence; as the Father of the everlasting age. And he shall see his seed, and shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

And because he lives, we shall live also. His resurrection is the model, the cause, the proof, and the earnest, of our own. For there is a union between Christ and Christians, by which they are federally and vitally one. When, therefore, he died, they were crucified with him; and when he arose and ascended, they were quickened together with him, and raised up, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places. And though their bodies return to the dust, *they* will not see corruption *for ever*—for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

The believer, therefore, can also say, Thou wilt shew *me* the path of life. This life means the blessedness reserved in heaven for the people of God, after the resurrection. David here describes it—In thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. It has three characters. The first regards its *source*—It flows from "his presence." He is the fountain of life, and the supreme good of the mind.

The second regards its *plenitude*—It is *fulness* of joy. In this vale of tears every pleasure has its pain, and every comfort its cross. We pursue satisfaction, but we grasp vanity and vexation. We look to Jesus, and find him the consolation of Israel. But consolation supposes trouble. His fol-

lowers are described, not only by their rejoicing, but their mourning—without they have fightings, and within they have fears. They have blessed frames; and in some religious exercises, they seem to be partakers of the glory that shall be revealed. And so they are; but it is by a glimpse, a taste, a drop—the fulness is above.

The third regards its *permanency*—The pleasures are *for evermore*. Uncertainty, as well as deficiency, attaches to every thing here. We embrace our connexions, and, lo! they are gone. We set our hearts on that which is not.

If there was a possibility of the destruction, or loss of the blessedness above, we should be miserable in proportion to its greatness. From the moment of knowing it, the thought would poison all the joy. But, no—It is a crown of glory that fadeth not away. It is everlasting life!

APRIL 8.—"*If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*" Phil. iii. 11.

HERE the subject of consideration is, *the resurrection of the dead!* But it is obvious the Apostle does not refer to it as an event; for as an event it will be universal, and we shall be the subjects of it, whether we are willing or unwilling—for there will be "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." But he refers to it as a privilege. That can hardly be called a deliverance that takes a man out of a bad condition, and consigns him to a worse. What is it for a criminal to be led out of prison to be tried, and condemned, and executed? What is it for the body to be revived, but not renovated—inheriting the principles of all the evils entailed upon it by sin, and rendered

immortal for the duration of misery. The grave is better than hell. But while some will come forth unto the resurrection of damnation, others will come forth unto the resurrection of life—a resurrection that shall change the vile body, and fashion it like the Saviour's own glorious body—and complete all, that the Saviour has procured for us, and the Gospel has promised to us.

With regard to the acquisition of a share in this blessedness, the Apostle makes use of language that implies—valuation—difficulty—variety—submission: "*If by any means* I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

— It implies valuation of the object. Things may be important in themselves, and not prized by those whom they concern. And we see this with regard to the blessings of the Gospel; for though they are as superior to all wordly good, as the heavens are higher than the earth; yet men make light of them; and were we to judge of eternal salvation by the regard paid to it by the multitude, we should consider it a trifle unworthy a moment's serious thought. But what is it in the view of awakened souls? The "pilgrim," when leaving the City of Destruction, and implored by his friends and family to return, put his fingers in his ears, and ran, crying, Life! life! eternal life! Such wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. They hunger and thirst after righteousnesss. They count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. "Every thing," says Paul, "compared with this, is nothing." *This* is the prize of my high calling. If I miss it, I am undone for ever. If I reach it, the possession will realize all my hopes and desires—The very prospect, as I can make it my own, enlivens and cheers me in all my labours and sufferings—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

— It implies the difficulty of the acquirement. l excellent things require application and dili- nce; and he who rationally expects success must *determined*, and bring his mind to exertion and durance. What pains and patience are necessary attain human learning! "There is no royal way geometry." And is Divine wisdom the prey the idle and careless? Must we labour for the eat that perisheth; and can we, without labour, tain that meat which endureth unto everlasting e? No, says the Saviour, even in the very pas- ge in which he speaks of "giving it"—where it obvious, therefore, that the giving is not opposed diligence, but desert. How readest thou? "Strive enter in at the strait gate." "Work out your lvation with fear and trembling." "Fight the od fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." at take those who, in their religion, know nothing the privations and hardships of the soldier; thing of the unbending alacrity of the racer; ho never redeem their time; whose day is only stinguished from their night by the substitution sloth for sleep; who exercise no self-denial; ho never mortify the deeds of the body; whose uls do not follow hard after God—would it not perfectly absurd for one of these to say—"If by y means I might attain unto the resurrection of e dead?"

— It implies variety in the manner of reaching ory. This does not apply to the procuring of the essing. This is done already. Jesus said, as expired, "It is finished." He made peace by e blood of his cross; and brought in everlasting ghteousness—and all that believe on him are jus- fied from all things. At the Deluge people could drowned any where; but there was only one ark. he way of salvation has been always the same from e beginning—But the methods by which this lvation is applied are various. Various are the

means employed in our conversion; and various are the courses of duty in which we actually obtain the promise. All the Lord's people obey: for he is the author of eternal salvation only to them that obey him—but they are called to obey in very different ways. One is required to act the Christian in single; another, in relative life. One fills a public station; another, a private. Some are to receive with gratitude; others are to give with cheerfulness. Some must discharge the duties of prosperity; others, those of adversity. Our sufferings, too, vary as well as our services. One glorifies God by bearing reproach and persecution; another, by enduring bodily pain and infirmities. These have much outward trouble; and those, more inward conflict—each is to take up *his* cross and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. For,

Finally, it implies submission—not prescribing; not objecting—but referring every thing to the Divine pleasure—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Whatever they are, I bow to them. This implicit submission is necessary to evince the earnestness, and even sincerity of our conviction. Dr. Chyne often said to his patients, when they objected to the strictness of his regimen, "I see you are not bad enough for me, yet." For if a patient really believes and feels his disease and danger, he will shew it by readiness to yield to the remedies the physician enjoins, however trying they may be. Here, indeed, the great contention lies with many. It does not regard the end—they would have heaven—but not by *any* means—it must be by those of their own devising or choosing. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Jordan? May I not wash in them, and be clean? But when a man is at the point to die—for ever—he will acquiesce in any means of deliverance, however mysterious to his

reason, however humiliating to his pride, however adverse to his sin and sloth.

God will have the whole management of our case; or he will have nothing to do with it. And he ought to have it—for this submission is an homage due to his sovereignty. We have no claim upon him; and it is wonderful mercy and grace, that he will save and bless us at all.—We owe it, also, to his wisdom and goodness: for, though he is a Sovereign, in the exercise of his prerogative, he does not act arbitrarily; but does all things well: his work is perfect.—The issue, too, is such as to justify our submission to *any* means in securing it. In earthly things, the honey does not always pay for the sting; nor the rose for the thorns. But here the success will infinitely more than remunerate all our services and sacrifices.—And the success, also, is sure. How many cases are there, in which means, any means, may be used in vain! The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. In every department of human enterprize, the successful candidates are few. Yea, the event in *no* other pursuit is infallible. But if you are like-minded with Paul, you need not fear the result. The gate of mercy was never yet shut against a returning sinner. Their heart shall live that seek God.

April 9.—"*Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*" Rom. vi. 8.

The death and the resurrection of Christ, constitute the substance of the Gospel: and our concern with them, includes more than our admitting them into our creed, as doctrinal truths. They must become internal principles, and produce in us corresponding effects. He died; and we must be dead—dead to the law; not as a rule of life, but as a covenant of

works. Dead to the world: not as the scene of God's wonderful works; nor as a sphere of duty, or a field of usefulness; but as the enemy of God, and our portion. Dead to sin—This includes nothing less than our avoiding it; but it intends much more: we may be alive to it even while we forsake it. But we must no longer love, or relish it—and *thus* no longer live in it. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

We must be dead *with him*. We are dead with him *virtually*. For he is the Head and Representative of his Church; and therefore what he did for his people, is considered as done by them.—We are dead with him *efficiently*. For there is an influence derived from his Cross, which mortifies us to sin; and this influence is not moral only, consisting in the force of argument and motive—though this is true: and nothing shews the evil of sin, or the love of the Saviour, like Calvary. But it is spiritual, also. He died to purify, as well as to redeem; and he not only made reconciliation for the sins of the people, but received gifts for men, and secured the agency of the Holy Spirit. There is no real holiness separate from the grace of the Cross. There he draws all men unto him.—We are dead with him as to resemblance. We are planted together in the likeness of his death; and therefore our death is called, as well as his, a crucifixion: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." I am, says the Apostle, not only dead, but crucified with Christ. That mode of dying was a painful one; and a visible one; and a gradual one; and a sure one: for the moment the body was fastened to the Cross, it was as good as dead; the bones might be broken, to accelerate the event, but it was never taken down alive. All this is easily applied to the crucifying of the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

But he rose, and now lives—and we shall live *with him*. That is—in consequence of his living. Because he lives, we shall live also. For we are quickened together with Christ, and are raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places. That is—in his company. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. We have much in heaven to endear it. How delightful will it be to join our friends with all their infirmities done away—But to depart, to be with Christ, is far better. That is—in fellowship with him. We may live with another, and not live like him. We may be with another, and behold his estate, but not share it. But when He who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. I appoint unto you, says he to his disciples, a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Even our vile body shall be fashioned like his own glorious body. And the same duration attaches to his blessedness, and ours. I am alive, says he, for evermore; and our end is everlasting life.

Finally, Paul *believed* all this. And let us do the same: but let us believe it *as* he did. That is—Let us believe, that we shall live with him, *if* we be dead with him. Some believe it without this. But their faith is only presumption. Whatever they rely upon, whether their knowledge, or orthodoxy, or talking, or profession; they are only preparing for themselves the most bitter disappointment—if they are not dead unto sin, and delivered from the present evil world—for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

— But let us also believe, that if we be dead with him, we *shall* also live with him. The inclusive is as sure as the exclusive; and takes in every diversity, and degree of grace. Whatever be their apprehensions of themselves, none of them all shall come

short of this glory. It is as certain as the promise, and oath, and covenant of God, and the death and intercession of the Saviour, and the pledges and earnests of immortality, can render it.

Therefore, be not faithless, but believing. It was used by Christians to animate and encourage each other, in the Apostles' days, as a common and familiar aphorism; and they gave it full credit—"It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him."

APRIL 10.—"*The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*" 1 Peter i. 11.

CONNECTED with the sufferings of Christ, there was a threefold glory.

— There was a glory that *preceded* his sufferings. This is implied in his language—"I came forth from the Father;" "I came down from heaven." But it is expressly mentioned, when he says, "The glory that I had with Thee before the world began." What condescension can there be where there is no previous dignity? And what possessions can a being claim before his existence? But he was rich, and for our sakes became poor. He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God. He took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

There was a glory that *accompanied* his sufferings. There is often much parade at the death of a monarch, and by a shew of greatness, an attempt is made to conceal or alleviate the disgrace of real littleness. But what are the suspensions of business, the splendid equipage, the tolling of bells, the solemn music, the discharge of artillery—

"HE dies—the heavens in mourning stood"—

The sun was darkened. The earth shook. The rocks rent. The graves were opened. The dead arose. Spiritual trophies, blended with the prodigies of Nature. Peter's heart was broken at a look. The Centurion, watching, exclaimed, Surely this man was the Son of God. All the people that came together to that sight smote their breasts and returned. The dying thief believed with the heart, and confessed with the tongue unto salvation; and received an assurance of an immediate place in Paradise. And what a scene of moral glory was here also displayed—in his readiness to suffer; in his apology for his slumbering disciples; in the order to Peter to put up his sword; in his healing the ear of his enemy's servant; in his stipulating for the safety of his Apostles; in his confession before Pontius Pilate; in his bearing without resentment the mocking, the spitting, the scourging; in his sympathy with the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, in his way to Calvary; in his tender concern for his widowed mother, on the cross; in his prayer for his murderers—Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!—where shall we end? Here, Celsus endeavours to turn his glory into shame. Having represented him as despitefully used, arrayed in purple robes, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the tree; he cries out, in the name of wonder, Why, on this occasion at least, does he not act the God? and hurl some signal vengeance on the authors of his insults and anguish? But, O Celsus! he does act the God. Any madman on earth, or fury in hell, is capable of anger, and wrath, and revenge—But to bear the most shocking provocations, and, though commanding the thunder and the flame, forbear to punish, and only pity!—If it be the glory of a man to pass by a transgression; and the noblest triumph, to overcome evil with good; he died gloriously, beyond all example. Yes—says even a Rousseau; If the death

of Socrates was the death of a sage, the death of Jesus was the death of a God.

There was also a glory that *followed* his sufferings. From the clouds that had concealed him, he issues forth, in all the radiance of immortality, declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness, in his resurrection from the dead. An angel descends, and rolls away the door of the sepulchre, and sits in glory upon it; and shakes the ground; and causes the Roman guards to flee for fear. His disciples are re-animated, and re-assembled, to whom, also, he shewed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible signs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. See him ascend into heaven, far above all principality, and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Were there glories on the day of Pentecost? *He* shed forth that which was seen and heard. He filled the Apostles with the Holy Ghost, according to his promise, so that they spake with new tongues, and all the people heard, in their own language, the wonderful works of God. And three thousand were converted under one sermon. All the miracles his servants performed were done in his Name, and were rays of his glory. The establishment of the Gospel then, and the spread of it since, and every soul called by grace, is a part of the joy set before him, wherein he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.

And, oh! the glories that are yet to follow—when the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the Lamb! when he shall sprinkle many nations! when all nations shall fall down before him, and all kings shall serve him! And, oh! the glories that are yet to follow, when his mediation shall be completely accomplished, and he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them

; believe: and attract every eye, and fill every rt, and employ every tongue, for ever!
Saviour Jesus! may I be with thee where thou to behold thy glory!

APRIL 11.—"*In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, ll ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, under the fig-tree.*" Zech. iii. 10.

ys inspiration characterizes the reign of the ssiah—It was to be distinguished by three things. First, Is *enjoyment.* The very image is delight-
Vines and fig-trees were much prized in the t. They afforded at once delightful fruit for taste, and refreshing shade from the heat. sons therefore regaled themselves under their nches and leaves—and thus the expression in e came to signify happiness. And what said Lord to his disciples? Blessed are your eyes, they see; and your ears, for they hear. Because istians do not run to the same excess of riot with ers; and turn their back on the pleasures of and the dissipations of the world; many think y are mopish and melancholy. But blessed are people that know the joyful sound. It was so the beginning of the Gospel. Wherever it ne, it was received as good news, as glad tidings; l it was said of the receivers, that they walked, only in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts the Holy Ghost. It not only relieved, but de-ited them. It not only tranquillized them, but pired them with joy unspeakable and full of ry. Have we the same Gospel? Or do we brace it properly, if, instead of being thus *blessed,*

it leaves us in a dungeon of gloom, the victims of sadness, and care, and apprehension?

Second, Is *liberty*. Slaves and captives did not sit under their vines and fig-trees. Nor did proprietors in time of war. When invaded, they were liable to the surprises of the enemy. Then the inhabitants disappeared from these loved, but no longer safe retreats; and longed for the time when, released from perils and alarms, they should go forth with joy, and repose and refresh themselves again. Therefore, Rabshakeh, to urge the Jews to a surrender, said, "Make an agreement with me by a present; and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern." Hence we read, "There was peace all the days of Solomon, and from Dan to Beersheba the people sat every man under his vine and under his fig-tree." But a greater than Soloman is here. In "His days shall Israel be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely." What have his subjects to fear? If God be for us, who can be against us? What shall separate us from the love of God? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God: who also maketh intercession for us. Christians may therefore give up themselves to holy confidence. Their souls may dwell at ease. They are free indeed. They are kept by the power of God. They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. Let them realize this; and feel a peace that passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Let them say, "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation."

The third, Is *benevolence*. Ye shall *call* every man *his neighbour* under the vine, and under the fig-tree. There is nothing like selfishness here

—they are anxious that others should partake of heir privileges. There is no envy here—there is o room for it. Here is enough not only for hemselves, but for their neighbours—and for all of hem.

And if we are Christians indeed, our happiness, nstead of being impaired by the experience of thers, will be increased by it. Let us therefore emember the lepers. They had discovered plenty, nd were regaling themselves, while their fellow-itizens were perishing with famine in Samaria. But conscience smote them, and "they said one o another, We do not well: this day is a day of ood tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry ill the morning light, some mischief will come pon us: now therefore come, that we may go nd tell the king's household." Thus the first ubjects of Christianity said to the spiritually desti-ute and dying, "That which we have seen and eard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." Cursed be the temper of the elder brother that urned wretched at the tears of joy that bedewed he beard of an aged father; and the ecstasies of a family thrown into transport at the return and reception of the prodigal. Let me resemble in every feeling of my soul those happy beings who rejoice in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth. Let me invite all that come within my reach to that mercy which I have found. Let me say, O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him—and do this not only by my lips—but by all my temper, and all my conduct—holding forth the word of life.

APRIL 12.—"*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" Rom. iii. 24.

HERE we have an answer to the most important and interesting of all enquiries—"How shall man be just with God?"

To be justified, is to be acquitted from the charge brought against us, and absolved from the condemnation with which we were threatened. With regard to us, the condemnation was deserved, and the charge was true. This renders the case so difficult and peculiar; and calls for the Apostle's development.

But in exposing the source of the privilege, he seems to use a tautology—"Being justified *freely by his grace*." If it be done freely, it must be of grace: and if it be gracious, it must be free. Yet this is not saying too much. Paul knew that men were proud, and vain: and that, as Simon Magus thought of purchasing the Holy Ghost with money, so they, in dealing with God about their souls, wish to be merchants, rather than suppliants; and would seem to buy, while they are compelled to beg. But, surely, if it be not saying too much, it is saying enough. Surely, after this, the freeness and graciousness of the thing cannot be questioned. It is not only free and gracious, as opposed to constraint, but as opposed to worthiness. Merit in a sinner, is impossible—*his* desert lies all on the other side. *There* he is worthy—and worthy of death. A man, who asks a favour, may have no claim upon you; but you may also have no demand upon him: and, therefore, though you may justly refuse him, yet you have no right to apprehend, and punish him. But God has a right to punish, and destroy *us;* and it is of his mercies that *we* are not consumed.—It is also free and gracious, as opposed to *desire*. This is undeniable, with regard to the constitution and accom-

plishment of the plan itself—for these long preceded even our being. But is it true, with regard to the application of it? The Publican prayed, God, be merciful to me, a sinner: and went down to his house justified. And you sought, and found. But what induced you to seek? A sense of your want of the blessing. But how came you to feel this, after being so long insensible of it? Hearing such a preacher. But who made this preacher, and sent him, and placed him in your way, and applied what he said to your heart?—And the same may be asked, with regard to any other instrumentality. Go as far back as you please; when you arrive, you will find Him there before you, with all his preparations and excitements; and will hear Him say, as you approach, "Come, for all things are now ready."

"No sinner can be
"Beforehand with Thee:
"Thy grace is preventing, almighty, and free."

But the Apostle tells us of the medium of the privilege—"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And it is obvious *he* did not deem this inconsistent with the former. He knew that it was still freely by his grace. It was with God to determine, whether the Law should take its course, or the penalty be transferred to the surety: for the sentence was, "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die." It was, therefore, an instance of his sovereign grace, to admit a substitute. Besides; if he required reparation, he himself provided the Lamb for a burnt-offering. Herein "God hath commended his *love* toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us:" and hence the exclamation, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." We have an illustration of this, in the case of Job's friends. They had displeased

God; and yet he was willing that they should be reconciled. *He* therefore ordered a proceeding that should be available: "Therefore, take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly." The sacrifice, and the intercession of Job, did not *dispose* God to shew them mercy, for he prescribed them; but they were the way in which he chose to exercise it. And thus, "*He* laid on him the iniquities of us all." "*He* made him, who knew no sin, to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This redemption, therefore, is the effect of his goodness. He loved his own Son, *because* he laid down his life for us; and highly exalted him, *because* he was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

We cannot say too much of God's mercy—this is the origin of all our hopes. But, surely, he had a right to determine the way in which it should be extended towards those who had no claims upon it: and of the propriety of the way, both with regard to himself and us, he was the only competent judge. And, therefore, if he has appointed a way, and revealed it in his word; ignorance, pride, or rebellion only, can lead us to oppose or neglect it—And wretchedness and ruin must be the sure result. If we could not see the reasonableness of the dispensation, yet, if He has declared, that it "became him," we should be bound to acquiesce and adore. But we can see that he has herein abounded towards us, in all wisdom and prudence; that here, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other; that the Law is magnified, and made honourable; that sin is condemned in the flesh; that God is just, while he justifies the ungodly who believeth in Jesus—and that every end that could

have been answered by the destruction of the sinner has been equally—better—infinitely better answered by the death of the Saviour.

And now what wait we for? We are accepted in the Beloved. Let us come in his Name. Let us draw near in full assurance of faith. Let us joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. And let us not conceal, but zealously and gladly make known, the blessedness that has made us free indeed.

April 13.—"*Upon one stone shall be seven eyes.*" Zech. iii. 9.

The Lord Jesus is often called a stone; and seldom without some attribute of distinction. Thus Peter calls him, "A living stone;" and Isaiah, "A tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." And here the use of him is announced. He is the basis to sustain the complete salvation of the Church of God, which is his house—his temple. Of such a structure, how great would be the fall! The crash would be heard beyond the stars. But what can bear up for ever the weight of such an edifice? Our worthiness, and works? Our righteousness, and strength? Better would the sliding sand, the leaf of Autumn, the down of the thistle, support St. Paul's Cathedral, or one of the pyramids of Egypt, or the pillars of the earth. But He is infinitely equal to the importance of his station: and whoso believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

But let us observe the notice he was to excite and engage—Upon one stone shall be seven eyes. Seven, is not to be taken here literally: it is what the Jews call a perfect number; and is designed to

short of this glory. It is as certain as the promise, and oath, and covenant of God, and the death and intercession of the Saviour, and the pledges and earnests of immortality, can render it.

Therefore, be not faithless, but believing. It was used by Christians to animate and encourage each other, in the Apostles' days, as a common and familiar aphorism; and they gave it full credit—"It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him."

APRIL 10.—"*The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*" 1 Peter i. 11.

CONNECTED with the sufferings of Christ, there was a threefold glory.

— There was a glory that *preceded* his sufferings. This is implied in his language—"I came forth from the Father;" "I came down from heaven." But it is expressly mentioned, when he says, "The glory that I had with Thee before the world began." What condescension can there be where there is no previous dignity? And what possessions can a being claim before his existence? But he was rich, and for our sakes became poor. He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God. He took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

There was a glory that *accompanied* his sufferings. There is often much parade at the death of a monarch, and by a shew of greatness, an attempt is made to conceal or alleviate the disgrace of real littleness. But what are the suspensions of business, the splendid equipage, the tolling of bells, the solemn music, the discharge of artillery—

"HE dies—the heavens in mourning stood"—

The sun was darkened. The earth shook. The rocks rent. The graves were opened. The dead arose. Spiritual trophies, blended with the prodigies of Nature. Peter's heart was broken at a look. The Centurion, watching, exclaimed, Surely this man was the Son of God. All the people that came together to that sight smote their breasts and returned. The dying thief believed with the heart, and confessed with the tongue unto salvation; and received an assurance of an immediate place in Paradise. And what a scene of moral glory was here also displayed—in his readiness to suffer; in his apology for his slumbering disciples; in the order to Peter to put up his sword; in his healing the ear of his enemy's servant; in his stipulating for the safety of his Apostles; in his confession before Pontius Pilate; in his bearing without resentment the mocking, the spitting, the scourging; in his sympathy with the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, in his way to Calvary; in his tender concern for his widowed mother, on the cross; in his prayer for his murderers—Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!—where shall we end? Here, Celsus endeavours to turn his glory into shame. Having represented him as despitefully used, arrayed in purple robes, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the tree; he cries out, in the name of wonder, Why, on this occasion at least, does he not act the God? and hurl some signal vengeance on the authors of his insults and anguish? But, O Celsus! he does act the God. Any madman on earth, or fury in hell, is capable of anger, and wrath, and revenge—But to bear the most shocking provocations, and, though commanding the thunder and the flame, forbear to punish, and only pity!—If it be the glory of a man to pass by a transgression; and the noblest triumph, to overcome evil with good; he died gloriously, beyond all example. Yes—says even a Rousseau; If the death

of Socrates was the death of a sage, the death of Jesus was the death of a God.

There was also a glory that *followed* his sufferings. From the clouds that had concealed him, he issues forth, in all the radiance of immortality, declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness, in his resurrection from the dead. An angel descends, and rolls away the door of the sepulchre, and sits in glory upon it; and shakes the ground; and causes the Roman guards to flee for fear. His disciples are re-animated, and re-assembled, to whom, also, he shewed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible signs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. See him ascend into heaven, far above all principality, and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world; but also in that which is to come. Were there glories on the day of Pentecost? *He* shed forth that which was seen and heard. He filled the Apostles with the Holy Ghost, according to his promise, so that they spake with new tongues, and all the people heard, in their own language, the wonderful works of God. And three thousand were converted under one sermon. All the miracles his servants performed were done in his Name, and were rays of his glory. The establishment of the Gospel then, and the spread of it since, and every soul called by grace, is a part of the joy set before him, wherein he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.

And, oh! the glories that are yet to follow—when the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the Lamb! when he shall sprinkle many nations! when all nations shall fall down before him, and all kings shall serve him! And, oh! the glories that are yet to follow, when his mediation shall be completely accomplished, and he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them

ıt believe: and attract every eye, and fill every art, and employ every tongue, for ever!
Saviour Jesus! may I be with thee where thou ;, to behold thy glory!

April 11.—"*In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, ill ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, d under the fig-tree.*" Zech. iii. 10.

ıus inspiration characterizes the reign of the essiah—It was to be distinguished by three things.
First, Is *enjoyment*. The very image is delight-. Vines and fig-trees were much prized in the ıst. They afforded at once delightful fruit for e taste, and refreshing shade from the heat. rsons therefore regaled themselves under their anches and leaves—and thus the expression in ne came to signify happiness. And what said r Lord to his disciples? Blessed are your eyes, r they see; and your ears, for they hear. Because ıristians do not run to the same excess of riot with hers; and turn their back on the pleasures of ı, and the dissipations of the world; many think ey are mopish and melancholy. But blessed are e people that know the joyful sound. It was so the beginning of the Gospel. Wherever it me, it was received as good news, as glad tidings; d it was said of the receivers, that they walked, ıt only in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts the Holy Ghost. It not only relieved, but de-ghted them. It not only tranquillized them, but spired them with joy unspeakable and full of ory. Have we the same Gospel? Or do we nbrace it properly, if, instead of being thus *blessed*,

it leaves us in a dungeon of gloom, the victims of sadness, and care, and apprehension?

Second, Is *liberty*. Slaves and captives did not sit under their vines and fig-trees. Nor did proprietors in time of war. When invaded, they were liable to the surprises of the enemy. Then the inhabitants disappeared from these loved, but no longer safe retreats; and longed for the time when, released from perils and alarms, they should go forth with joy, and repose and refresh themselves again. Therefore, Rabshakeh, to urge the Jews to a surrender, said, "Make an agreement with me by a present; and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern." Hence we read, "There was peace all the days of Solomon, and from Dan to Beersheba the people sat every man under his vine and under his fig-tree." But a greater than Soloman is here. In "His days shall Israel be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely." What have his subjects to fear? If God be for us, who can be against us? What shall separate us from the love of God? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God: who also maketh intercession for us. Christians may therefore give up themselves to holy confidence. Their souls may dwell at ease. They are free indeed. They are kept by the power of God. They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. Let them realize this; and feel a peace that passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Let them say, "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation."

The third, Is *benevolence*. Ye shall *call* every man *his neighbour* under the vine, and under the fig-tree. There is nothing like selfishness here

— With regard to the *disciples*, it shews us their weakness and depravity. They fled, from fear; but their fear was needless—for he had stipulated for their safety, when he surrendered himself in the Garden: "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way; that the saying might be fulfilled, Of them which Thou hast given me, I have lost none." They were under great obligations to him. He had done much for them, in calling them by his grace, and dignifying them with the Apostleship. And he was now going to bleed and die for them. And they had professed a great attachment to him: for when Peter said, Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee: so said all the disciples—yet they all forsook him, and fled! Lord, what is man!

Yet this culpable cowardice was overruled for good. For their very declension made their witness, after his resurrection, the more unexceptionably credible; and the weakness of their faith is the strengthening of ours. They were not persons of hasty belief. They had doubted, and, for the time, abandoned the cause, saying, "We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:" and were repairing to their former home and callings. What could have rallied them, and brought them back, and inspired them with courage to go forth, and bear reproach, and persecution, and death, in his Name, but a conviction that nothing could resist?

— With regard to the *Saviour*, this was a part, and a very trying part of his abasement and passion. A friend is born for adversity. Then his presence, his sympathy, his countenance, is peculiarly desirable and necessary. Common humanity says, To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewed of his friend—But *he* looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforter, and he found none. These men had been three years with him—they could have borne witness to his freedom from sedition; his innocency; his piety. They could have cheered him

APRIL 12.—"*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"
Rom. iii. 24.

HERE we have an answer to the most important and interesting of all enquiries—"How shall man be just with God?"

To be justified, is to be acquitted from the charge brought against us, and absolved from the condemnation with which we were threatened. With regard to us, the condemnation was deserved, and the charge was true. This renders the case so difficult and peculiar; and calls for the Apostle's development.

But in exposing the source of the privilege, he seems to use a tautology—"Being justified *freely by his grace.*" If it be done freely, it must be of grace: and if it be gracious, it must be free. Yet this is not saying too much. Paul knew that men were proud, and vain: and that, as Simon Magus thought of purchasing the Holy Ghost with money, so they, in dealing with God about their souls, wish to be merchants, rather than suppliants; and would seem to buy, while they are compelled to beg. But, surely, if it be not saying too much, it is saying enough. Surely, after this, the freeness and graciousness of the thing cannot be questioned. It is not only free and gracious, as opposed to constraint, but as opposed to worthiness. Merit in a sinner, is impossible—*his* desert lies all on the other side. *There* he is worthy—and worthy of death. A man, who asks a favour, may have no claim upon you; but you may also have no demand upon him: and, therefore, though you may justly refuse him, yet you have no right to apprehend, and punish him. But God has a right to punish, and destroy *us;* and it is of his mercies that *we* are not consumed.—It is also free and gracious, as opposed to *desire.* This is undeniable, with regard to the constitution and accom-

plishment of the plan itself—for these long preceded even our being. But is it true, with regard to the application of it? The Publican prayed, God, be merciful to me, a sinner: and went down to his house justified. And you sought, and found. But what induced you to seek? A sense of your want of the blessing. But how came you to feel this, after being so long insensible of it? Hearing such a preacher. But who made this preacher, and sent him, and placed him in your way, and applied what he said to your heart?—And the same may be asked, with regard to any other instrumentality. Go as far back as you please; when you arrive, you will find Him there before you, with all his preparations and excitements; and will hear Him say, as you approach, "Come, for all things are now ready."

"No sinner can be
"Beforehand with Thee:
"Thy grace is preventing, almighty, and free."

But the Apostle tells us of the medium of the privilege—"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And it is obvious *he* did not deem this inconsistent with the former. He knew that it was still freely by his grace. It was with God to determine, whether the Law should take its course, or the penalty be transferred to the surety: for the sentence was, "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die." It was, therefore, an instance of his sovereign grace, to admit a substitute. Besides; if he required reparation, he himself provided the Lamb for a burnt-offering. Herein "God hath commended his *love* toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us:" and hence the exclamation, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." We have an illustration of this, in the case of Job's friends. They had displeased

the beautiful lines of Cowper, on his mother's picture, is the delusion employed to comfort him—

> "Thy maidens, griev'd themselves at my concern,
> "Oft gave me promise of thy quick return:
> "What ardently I wish'd, I long believ'd,
> "And disappointed still, was still deceiv'd.
> "By disappointment ev'ry day beguil'd,
> "Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child—
> "Thus many a sad to-morrow came, and went,
> "'Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
> "I learn'd, at last, submission to my lot;
> "But, though I less deplor'd thee, ne'er forgot."

And—the same lesson we must all learn, with regard to every dear delight we here enjoy. The departing Joseph said unto his brethren, "I die; and God will surely visit you." He does not say, I will visit you—he knew he was going the way whence he could not return. But Divinity *here* speaks, as well as friendship. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." This is the language, not only of foreknowledge, but of sovereign dominion: the language of one who had the keys of hell, and of death: of one who said, No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself—I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Even death would not interrupt his goodness; nor his entering another world affect his intercourse with his people in this. His presence with them was not confined to his bodily residence. While on earth, he said, "The Son of man, who is in heaven." And now, though in heaven, he is no less on earth. Lo! said he, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

— And can we help perceiving, here, how indispensable he is to the happiness of his people? The disciples were comfortless in the view of his absence; and it is easy to account for this, from their attachment to him, and from the pleasure and profit they had derived from him. We feel, and tremble,

groan, at parting with a friend, or relation. t must the feelings of the disciples have been, he thought of losing *him*! They would be left he world, like sheep without their shepherd; travellers in a wilderness, without their guide; orphans, bereaved of the father's care, and the ıer's bosom. And what could comfort them, the promise of *himself* again? Had he said, ll not leave you comfortless, I will send you s, and honours; princes shall be your friends, angels your servants—what would all this have , without the assurance, "*I* will come to you?" this is sufficient. Here is a resource equal he exigency; a consolation adequate to all the ess.

The good found in creatures is always finite, very limited. It is also much dispersed, so that nust apply to many, to contribute their part to e up one comfort. The happiness we derive creatures is like a beggar's garment—it is e up of pieces, and patches, and is worth very after all. But the blessedness we derive from Saviour is single, and complete. In him all ss dwells. He is coeval with every period. He swerable to every condition. He is a physician, eal; a counsellor, to plead; a king, to govern; end, to sympathise; a father, to provide. He foundation, to sustain; a root, to enliven; a tain, to refresh. He is the shadow from the ; the bread of life; the morning star; the sun ghteousness—all, and in all. No creature can substitute for him; but he can supply the place very creature. He is all my salvation, and all desire; my hope, my peace, my life, my glory, joy.

Whom have I in heaven, but Thee? and there ne upon earth that I desire beside thee. My and my heart faileth, but Thou art the strength y heart, and my portion for ever. I cannot be

APRIL 17.—"*Behold, thereof, saith the Lord o*

THAT is, of the stone, u eyes, and which intends laid in Zion.

To engrave, is to p became a man of sorrow hath broken my heart; the smiters, and his ch off the hair; when the cr temples, and the nails hi spear his side—then, O m fulfilled.

As there is no engr so to engrave is to embe he was made perfect th "I do cures," said he, "to the third day I shall be calls the season of his

ıd the praises he will inhabit through eternal ages -all these resulted from his sufferings, according) the language of divine prophecy, and history— When thou shalt make his soul an offering for n, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, ıd the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his ınd. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and ıall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my ghteous servant justify many, for he shall bear ıeir iniquity." "Because he was obedient unto eath, even the death of the cross, therefore God ath highly exalted him, and given him a Name bove every name."

And as is the heavenly, such are they also that re heavenly. To a person unacquainted with the rocess, the pruning of the tree; the cleaving of the round with the ploughshare; the operation of the hisel on the stone; would look like an effort to ıjure or destroy. But look at the thing after-'ards. Behold the vine, adorned with purple clus-ers. Survey the field, yielding the blade, the ear, he full corn in the ear. Examine the carved 'ork when the sculptor has achieved his design, nd fixed it in the proper place!

— Christians are sometimes perplexed, and dis-ouraged, because of their trials. They know not 'hat God is doing with them. They fear he is ngry, and going to crush and destroy. But they re his workmanship. He is preparing them for heir destination in the temple of his grace. These rials are applied to qualify and advance them. 'hey will all perfect that which concerneth them. Ioward was taken by the enemy, and confined in rison. There he learned the heart of a captive: nd this experience originating in his suffering, xcited and directed his thoughts, and led him into ll his extraordinary course of usefulness and fame. t is good for me, says David, that I have been fflicted. I know, says Paul, that this shall turn

to my salvation. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

April 18.—"*Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*" Matt. xiii. 33.

We may consider the kingdom of Heaven, as intending the empire of the Gospel in the world; and also the empire of grace in the heart.

Let us confine our attention to the latter.

The leaven in the meal is a foreign importation. It is not naturally in the meal, nor derived from it. It is the same with Divine grace. Though it resides in us, it does not arise from us: for in our natural state dwelleth no good thing—It is altogether a new production; and so alien is it from the man himself, who is the subject of it, that the introduction of the principle occasions a ferment, or contest, that lasts for life—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

The leaven in the meal is active, and operating. There it works; and evinces its residence by its agency. And the grace of God—Is this a dead, powerless thing? Is it a notion? Or a principle? We read of the work of faith; the labour of love; the patience of hope. The same may be said of repentance: "What carefulness it *wrought* in you; yea, what zeal! yea, what revenge!" I will shew thee, says James, my faith by my works: I will shew thee the sun, by its shining; and the spring, by the streams. Faith justifies the soul; but works justify faith, and prove it to be of the operation of God.

The leaven is assimilating. It converts; it

changes—not by destroying the substance of the meal, but the quality; communicating its own property, tincture, relish. It is the same here. We are transformed by the renewing of the mind. The man remains physically the same as he was before; the same in his relations, talents, condition, business —Yet he is another man; a new man. He is evangelized. He has something of the holy and heavenly nature of divine truth in him. If the grace of God be light, it enlightens him. If salt, it seasons him. If glory, it glorifies him. If leaven, it leavens him.

The operation of the leaven is gradual. The effect in the meal is not produced at once; but by degrees. And do we not read of being renewed day by day? of going from strength to strength? of being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord? The work would want the evidence of analogy, if it were instantaneous. In the family, we see children becoming young men; and young men becoming fathers. In the field, we see, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. Some are not sensible of their religious advancement; and the reason is, they judge by the growing, rather than by the growth. The one escapes us; the other is perceptible. Were you to stand by the side of the most rapidly growing plant, you would not see it grow; but you would see when it was grown. Thus judge yourselves, and see whether there is not an increase in your convictions of sin, and the vanity of the world, and the preciousness of the Saviour. Thus look at your dispositions; your dependence; your taste; your diligence; your self-denial, in the service and ways of God.

The influence of the leaven is diffusive. Commencing from the centre, it reaches, in due time, to the extremities, and penetrates every particle of the meal. The grace of God is lodged in the heart; but it is not confined there. It reaches all the

powers of the man's mind, and all the senses of his body. It enters all his situations, and circumstances in life. It affects him in the field; in the shop; in the family; in all his connexions; in all his civil, and common actions; and whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God.

— And, as the leaven ultimately attains its object, and leavens the whole—so here the issue of the grace of God will be universal and complete holiness. It will sanctify us wholly—body, soul, and spirit. It will perfect that which concerneth us—and the result is sure, even now. How small soever the leaven is, compared with the mass, the less will prevail, and subdue the greater. The dawn will chase away the night, and blaze in full day. "He which hath begun a good work, will perform it." Let us not despise, therefore, the day of small things, either in ourselves or others.

April 19.—"*We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" 1 John iii. 16.

In the beginning of the Gospel this test of love was frequently required: and Christians not only dared to be companions of them that suffered, but were ready to suffer for them. So Paul testifies of Priscilla and Aquila, his helpers in Christ: "Who," says he, "have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles." It is well the providence of God does not call us to such a severe trial. But surely the principle requires us to be ready to do *every thing in our power* on *their* behalf; and will not allow us to refuse

any *service* or *sacrifice* for our brethren, however *arduous*.

We may do much for their minds; by dissipating their doubts, removing their fears, and bringing them comfort in their spiritual distresses. Thus Jonathan went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel. A Christian is self-suspicious, and is afraid of every conclusion in his own favour drawn by himself: he sees not the consolation to which he is entitled, though so near him—But another, like the Angel to Hagar, may open his eyes, and shew him the well. Sometimes he is cast down, supposing many things are peculiar to himself; especially those painful feelings which arise from the assaults of Satan, and his conflict with indwelling sin, more and more of which he is continually discovering. But you can relieve him, by opening your own experience, and letting him know that it is so with you. There is another important case: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

What can be dearer to a man than reputation? A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches: but it may be injured various ways. And surely we ought to be alive to a brother's character; and willingly throw ourselves between him and the strife of tongues. When any thing is said to his disparagement, we should shew that charity, which rejoiceth not in iniquity; but hopeth all things. We should frown away the slander of insinuation. We should not allow a relater to go on, without enquiring whether he will allow us to name it to the person aggrieved, or the person from whom he affirms to have derived it. What a world of calumny and mischief would this prevent! He that helps not

in the circulation of the report, yet, if he pleasingly, or even patiently, sits to hear it, shares half the blame: and, as Dr. South says, the tale-bearer and the tale-hearer should be both hanged up, back to back, only the one by the tongue, and the other by the ear.

The body may need help. And our Saviour bore our infirmities, and sicknesses, by compassion, and sympathy. *His* commiseration could bear them away from the sufferers. We cannot perform miracles. But we may be useful by medical aid, and by personal attendance, and succour. And where the malady cannot be removed, the enduring may be alleviated. Is it nothing to the patient, that you visit him in his affliction? that he sees you at the side of the bed of languishing? that, by your tears and prayers, you are answering to the address—Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends! for the hand of God hath touched me?

The estate of our brethren may call for assistance; and is to be relieved according to our ability. It will be as base in us as unprofitable to them, to say, Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled, while we give them not those things which are needful to the body. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Job could say, The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. It was the saying of our Lord, It is more blessed to give than to receive. It was the glory of Christianity, in its first powerful effect, that none who embraced it "lacked." As glory in heaven, and as grace on earth, so the blessings of Providence were free, and open to all. The property of Christians went along with their affections; "and distribution was made to every one as he had need." And so tender were they of each other, that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one

soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." "O, this is no rule for us." Well; take it, and interpret it in your own way. Yet, will not—what even *you* infer from it as a duty, include much more than is now found in the temper and practice of Christians? "But we are not able."—This is commonly the language of those who *are* able, but not willing. Some *incapacitate* themselves. A decent distinction above the vulgar will not satisfy them: they must be splendid in dress, and luxurious in table, and magnificent in furniture. Others are disabled by hoarding. If accumulation be not condemned by Christianity, the extent of it is. A man may decently provide for his family, without wishing to leave them in the snares of affluence, and with a heap, which, if they do not dissipate by vice and excess, they are likely only to be concerned to enlarge. And may not persons increase their powers of beneficence, by diligence, and economy, and *self-denial?* And is not self-denial the first lesson in the school of Christ? And you know the grace of Him, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you, through his poverty, might be rich.—"WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN."

APRIL 20.—"*And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly.*" Luke xxii. 44.

AND what must this agony have been, when it is added, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground!" What, my soul, could have caused this?

"Oh! what wonders love has done!
"But how little understood:
"God well knew, and God alone,
"What produced that sweat of blood.
"Who can thy deep wonders see,
"Wonderful Gethsemane?"

—But let us now observe his deportment. For we are not only to view him as our Mediator in his passion, but as also suffering for us, to leave us an example that we should follow his steps—"In his agony, he prayed more earnestly." Not that he was cold and formal before, in his devotions; but as the hour and power of darkness advanced, and he began to be sore amazed and very heavy; and his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; there was more excitement in his feelings, and vehemency in his manner of expression.—Now were the days of his flesh, in which, with strong cryings and tears, he made supplications to Him, who was able to save him from death. So it is to be with us. Prayer is never out of season. We see this in his life. On what occasion did not he pray? But there is a time when it is specially seasonable. Therefore says God, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." Prayer is the design, the refuge, the solace, the improvement of affliction: and the greater the distress and anguish we are in, the more necessary will it be, both for our sanctification, and support—Let us, therefore, be the more importunate. In the greatness of our distress,

—Let us not, like Adam and Eve, flee, and endeavour to hide ourselves from God—but pray.

—Let us not, like Cain, begin to build, and try, by worldly projects, to dissipate our grief—but pray.

—Let us not, like Jonah, fret under the loss of our gourds, and tell God himself, that we do well to be angry, even unto death—but pray.

—Let us not, like Ephraim and Judah, repair

to creatures: "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wounds, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could not he heal them, or cure them of their wound"—but pray.

—Let us not, like Saul, who went to the Witch of Endor, repair to the Devil himself, by error, drunkenness, and sin—but pray.

—Let us not, like Ahithophel and Judas, have recourse to suicide, and plunge into hell, for relief—but pray—saying, with the Church, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up;" or, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in *Him*."

"I seem forsaken and alone,
"I hear the lions roar;
"And every door is shut, but one,
"And that is Mercy's door.

"*There*, till the dear Deliv'rer comes,
"I'll wait with humble pray'r:
"And when he calls his exile home,
"The Lord shall find me *there*."

April 21.—"*Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.*" Matt. xxviii. 5.

This was the address of an angel to Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, that had come to see the sepulchre before break of day. They were last at the cross, and first at the tomb. Favours are given sovereignly by the Lord, but honour is conferred according to a rule; and the rule is this—"Them that honour me, I will honour." These women were informed of his resurrection before the Apostles:

the Apostles received the intelligence from them; but they received it from an angel. At first, these pious visitants were afraid. And what wonder, when we consider—that they were females—that all their sensibilities were alive—that they were in another's garden—that they were alone—that the earth was reeling under them—that the guards were fleeing, and perhaps shrieking—that it was early in the morning—and the remaining darkness rendered more visible and awful the Divine Messenger sitting at the door of the tomb—his countenance as lightning, and his raiment white as snow! But, says the angel, "*You* have nothing to apprehend from *me*. He is my master, as well as your Saviour. I serve him whom ye seek; and having attended his resurrection, I now announce it to you. He is not here; he is risen, as he said—Step forward—Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

And it is true in its most extended application, that they who seek Jesus Christ which was crucified, have really nothing to fear, whatever at first may dismay them.

But who are entitled to this assurance? Do you feel your need of him as once you did not, for all the purposes of salvation? Have you desires after him—so peculiar that nothing else can satisfy them—so powerful as to make you willing to part with whatever stands in competition with him? Are you determined to press through all difficulties; and be found in the use of all the means which he has appointed? Are you submissively asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? depending on the aid of his Holy Spirit? and looking for his mercy unto eternal life? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, *I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.*

—And I also know, that ye have nothing to *fear*. "Fear not *ye*."—Fear not that you have a graceless heart—the very seeking is a token for good. It cannot be the effect of Nature—that which

the flesh, is flesh; but that which is of the t, is spirit. They that are after the flesh, do the things of the flesh; but they that are after Spirit, the things of the Spirit.—Fear not that search will be successless. Had he a mind ll you, he would not have shewn you such things ıese. His aim in making you sensible of your ition, was not to render you miserable, but to ar himself; and to draw forth your souls after You shall not be disappointed. You may ied, but he will appear to your joy. Did any seek him in vain? Can he deny himself? that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Blessed hey that do hunger and thirst after righteous. for they shall be filled.—Fear not, that you fall under the power of any evil. From what are not secured? Is it temporal want? The young may lack, and suffer hunger; but they that the Lord shall not want any good thing. Is e penalty of the Law? He has redeemed you the curse of the Law, having been made a for you. Is it sin? Sin shall not have nion over you; for ye are not under the Law, under grace. Is it the world? This is the ry that overcometh the world; even our faith. Satan? The God of peace will bruise Satan r your feet, shortly. Is it death? He has shed death. O death, where is thy sting? O , where is thy victory? "Nay, in all these s we are more than conquerors, through him loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither , nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor rs, nor things present, nor things to come, nor ıt, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be to separate us from the love of God, which is ırist Jesus our Lord."

APRIL 22.—*"And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."* Numb. x. 35, 36.

WE might have expected that Aaron would have done this, as he was the high priest. But Moses was the leader and commander of the people; and he was not offering sacrifice, or burning incense—in which he would have offended; but performing a duty of natural, as well as revealed religion. This is binding upon all; and especially upon public men. Thus Solomon, though a king, kneeled on a scaffold of wood at the dedication of the temple; and led himself the prayers of the nation. Princes, officers, magistrates, masters of families, should all be men of prayer. Relative, as well as personal claims, press on them.

It would seem that Moses, always on these occasions, employed the same terms. Our Lord also, in the garden, prayed three times, saying the same words. It is obvious from hence, that whatever advantages extemporaneous prayer possesses—and it has many—yet forms of prayer cannot be in themselves improper, in public or in private.

As Moses thus addressed God at the commencement, and the conclusion of every march—does it not behove us to acknowledge Him in all our ways? and with prayer to begin and end every day? every meal? every ordinance? every enterprise? every journey? every going out and every coming in?

Especially let us think of these short and sublime addresses in our travelling heavenward, through this wilderness-world.

Here is the marching prayer—"Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them

that hate thee flee before thee." That is—"Before we move, we commend ourselves to thy guidance. and guardian care, and almighty agency. We are passing, not only through strange, but hostile regions. There are foes, open or concealed, which would hinder our progress—rob us—wound us—destroy us. But we are thy charge, and engaged in thy cause. They that hate us, hate thee; our enemies are *thy* enemies. And formidable as they are, Thou canst as easily vanquish them as the sun rising in his strength can disperse the shadows that seem to oppose his march." Let us realize this, and we shall feel enough to animate us to go forward, though men, though devils, beset our path. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Here is the resting prayer—"Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." That is—"If *Thou* goest on, in vain we are left. What can we do without thee in our encampment, any more than in our march? Thy presence is our security, our treasure, our glory, our joy. What is any station without thee?—How can its duties be discharged? its trials be endured? its comforts be sanctified? But every residence with thee, is ennobled and blessed. Heaven is only the tabernacle of God with men.—Thus the two disciples, when the Lord made as if he would have gone further, constrained him, saying, It is toward evening, and the day is far spent—and—did he refuse? He went in to tarry with them. Do we thus prize him? Do we thus pray that he would go where we go, and dwell where we dwell? If not, we have a poor prospect before us. If we *can* live without God with us in this world, we *must* live without him in another. But if our souls cleave to Him, and cry,

"Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me"—we may rejoice in the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

— But let me not here overlook two things. First, The number of his people—"The many thousands of Israel." "For," unless we send out ignorance and bigotry to count them, "who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" And the Lord add to his people, how many soever they be, a thousandfold! Secondly, We should be concerned for the whole Israel of God. They all belong to us. They are all fellow-citizens of the same community; branches of the same household; members of the same body. They are more intimately related, and ought to be more endeared to us, than any earthly friends, or natural relations.

— Pray therefore for the peace of Jerusalem. For your brethren and companions' sakes, say, Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.—"Return, O Lord—not unto our family, or tribe; not unto the thousands of Episcopalians, or dissenters—but "unto the many thousands of Israel." "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." And, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

APRIL 23.—"*From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For thou has been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.*" Ps. lxi. 2, 3.

HE does us the most important service, who instructs us to pray. We may here learn much from the example of David.

— *How* would he pray? "I will *cry* unto Thee." Crying is a substitute for speech; and also the expression of earnestness. A child can cry, long before it can articulate; and its cries as much move the parent as any eloquence of words. A person in great danger, or want, or pain, not only utters himself, but cries out, and often aloud, according to the pressure of his feelings. Let me pray as I can. I may not be able to express my desires as some do; but, if I am deeply affected by them, and they spring from a broken heart and a contrite spirit, they shall not be despised.

— *Where* would he pray? "*From the ends of the earth* will I cry unto Thee." He means any condition, however desolate, or distant—distance of place being put for greatness of extremity. Sometimes we may be thrown into situations the most trying, and remote from human aid. But wherever we are, God is *there*, to hear and succour us. Thus Joseph found him, when sold into Egypt; and John, when he was exiled in Patmos; and Paul, when tossed far off upon the sea. We are as near the Throne of Grace in one place as another. Prayer can reach Him, wherever we are, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. "While they speak I will answer; and before they speak I will hear."

— *When* would he pray? "When my *heart is overwhelmed*." Not that he would restrain prayer at other times: we are to pray without ceasing. It is the character of a hypocrite, that he will not always call upon God. There are birds who only make a noise at the approach of bad weather; and there are persons who only pour out a prayer when God's chastening hand is upon them. But what should we think of a neighbour, or friend, who never called upon us, but when he wanted to borrow, or beg?—Yet, what is always proper, may be sometimes peculiarly seasonable, natural, and necessary. And this is the case when we are in trouble, and afflic-

tion. Therefore says God, Call upon me in the day of trouble. The answer will, in due time, relieve, and deliver. The exercise will immediately soothe and sanctify. Is any afflicted? Let him pray.

— *For what* would he pray? "*Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*" What means he by this Rock, but something which could afford him support, when he was ready to be swallowed up? The perfections of Jehovah; the everlasting Covenant; the doctrine of Providence; the Lord Jesus, who is our hope—This is the rest, and this is the refreshing. And yet, when the relief is provided, and when we see it too, we cannot reach it of ourselves. We need a divine agency to conduct us to it. We live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit.

— *Whence* does he derive his encouragement to pray? "For Thou *hast been* a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy." Nothing can be more confirming, and exciting, than the review of God's former interpositions on our behalf: and to reason from what he has been, to what he will be; and from what he has done, to what he will do. For He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And they that know his Name will put their trust in him.

"His love, in time past,
"Forbids me to think
"He 'll leave me, at last,
"In trouble to sink.
"Each sweet Ebenezer
"I have in review,
"Confirms his good pleasure
"To guide me quite through."

APRIL 24.—"*But now they are hid from thine eyes.*" Luke xix. 42.

WHEN Pharaoh saw there was respite, he hardened *his* heart. Solomon tells us, Because sentence

against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil.—But God's keeping silence is not approbation. His long-suffering is not even connivance. Cannot he be merciful, unless he allows us to trifle, and insult him, for ever? His patience has its rules, and its bounds. And Jerusalem knew this.

— Much has been said on what is termed, a day of grace; and much which we neither admire, or believe. We are not authorised to say any one is beyond hope, while he is yet in life. Manasseh would have seemed very likely to be such a desperate character; but *he* obtained mercy.

> "And while the lamp holds out to burn,
> "The vilest sinner may return."

If we cannot view any of our fellow-creatures as beyond the possibility of salvation, so we have no rule by which we can absolutely determine against ourselves—Yet there are several things of fearful import, to which we do well to attend.

First. The language of the Word of God is fearful. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." "Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts' lust." "In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee." "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." "Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." "Behold, now is

the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." We offer no commentary on these passages—but, surely, their language is fearful.

Secondly. We know that final impenitency is irrecoverably hopelesss; and *with life* all our opportunities end—and this is fearful. It would not be kindness, but cruelty, to flatter men with a contrary expectation. Search the Scripture, and you will always find a difference between the present, and the future. One is a state of trial, the other of decision. The one is sowing, the other reaping: and whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Is not this sufficient to induce us to seek the Lord, while he may be found; and to call upon him, while he is near?

Thirdly. This life, upon which every thing depends, is very brief—this is fearful. Look at the images of Scripture: a flower of the field; a flood; a watch in the night; a dream; a vapour. Consider the deaths that come under your own observation. Observe the frailty of your frame. Remember the numberless diseases, and accidents, to which you are exposed. Think of your pulse, where the question is asked sixty times every minute, whether you shall live or die—and then you may well exclaim—

> "Great God! on what a slender thread
> "Hang everlasting things!
> "The eternal state of all the dead
> "Upon life's feeble strings!

Fourthly. Our continuance here, is as uncertain as it is short—this is fearful. "I have not had," said a good man, "a to-morrow for years." It would be well if we had not. "Indeed, we have not in *reality*, whatever we may have in imagination. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Fifthly. Before this short, and uncertain period terminates, many opportunities and advantages may

elapse, to return no more—this is fearful. Many convictions may die away, no more to be renewed again unto repentance. We may be deprived of reason; and religion can only operate through the medium of thought. Old age helps on insensibility; and before we are aware, though unpardoned, and unrenewed, we may become incapable of a moral change. The Gospel may be removed from us. We may be placed where it is not in our power to attend it. We may become deaf, or blind. Sickness may confine us to a room of pain, or a bed of languishing. The influences necessary to render the means of grace effectual, may be withholden. Though Paul plants, and Apollos waters, God alone gives the increase: and though we can do nothing to deserve his grace, we may provoke his anger; and he may judicially give us up. The heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin—and no less so by familiarity with divine things. And is not this the case with many? Once their consciences smote them. They dropped a tear upon their Bible. When walking alone, among the works of God, they prayed, "Lord, I am thine; save me." But Felix no more trembles; and neglects to send for Paul. And the Gadarenes have besought the healer of their neighbours, and the reprover of their sin, to depart out of their coasts.

APRIL 25.—"*And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*" Mark i. 35.

AND yet he had been greatly occupied the whole of the day preceding this. We think little of time; but he never passed an idle hour. The whole of his life said, I must work the works of Him that

sent me, while it is yet day: the night cometh wherein no man can work. He was really a man; he took our infirmities: and wearied nature required repose: but he distinguished between the necessary and the needless; and even between refreshment and indulgence; and while he enjoined self-denial upon his disciples, as the very first lesson in his school, "He pleased not himself."

It is allowed, that as to the measure of sleep, no one rule can be laid down for all. Some require more than others. But it is questionable whether they require *much* more. Yea, it may be questioned whether they require *any* more, as to *length*. What they want more of, is better sleep: and the quality would be improved by lessening the quantity. Let those who are now so wakeful, and restless, and can only sleep sound when they ought to be rising—let them try the expedient, and see whether a few hours of sweet and solid sleep be not preferable to the protraction of being bedridden, rather than of enjoying repose.

We should also inquire too, whether we have not produced the habit itself that *now* demands so much to satisfy it. If so, we are accountable for the cause, as well as the effect.

— We should also be always fearful and suspicious when our reasonings and pleadings are on the side of gratification and ease. It is here, where nothing sinful is thought of, and no danger appears; it is here, we peculiarly need the admonition, Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

— Some live only to do evil. We do not wish *them* to rise early—they are only harmless while they sleep.

— Some live a life of mere indolence and ease. They are indeed free from vice, but they have no useful employment—It is of little importance at *what* time *they* rise. There is very little difference

between their sleeping and wakeful hours. The one is as barren as the other of any active endeavours to glorify God, or serve their generation, or work out their own salvation.

But surely there are some who feel that life is infinitely important: who know that they are placed here to gain good and to do good: who remember that the only opportunities they have for both, are short and uncertain—Surely these will say, Let us not sleep as do others—Surely these will feel the excitement and reproach—It is high time to awake out of sleep—They that sleep, sleep in the *night*.

— In a word, has not early rising every recommendation? Is it not *physically* advantageous? Is it not better for health? Consult your strength, your appetite, your nerves, your spirits, your complexion. Ask your physician. Is there a medical man upon earth that would risk his reputation by a contrary opinion? Sinclair, in his volumes on health and longevity, remarks, that though those who lived to a very great age differed in many things, they all resembled each other here. There was not one of them but rose early.

— Is it not desirable as to our civil concerns? What an advantage has a tradesman by early rising? in planning and arranging his concerns for the day? in forwarding his work, and placing it under his command? and in having leisure for any incidental engagement, without stopping or deranging the usual course of his calling?—While another, who has said, A little more sleep, a little more slumber; and who begins at ten what he should have commenced at six: is thrown into haste and confusion; hurries on to overtake himself; finds through the day his duty a turmoil; and feels himself a drudge. If we turn from the shop and look into the family, what a difference between the early and late mistress! and the early and the late servant! Even those who do

not practise early rising themselves plead for the importance of it in their domestics, and would never engage them without it. Indeed the reputation of every individual, whatever be his condition in life, is concerned in it; and his character, in the feelings of others, is unavoidably lowered by late rising, unless there be a known and justifiable cause.

— Above all, is it not *morally* important? The Heathens said, the morning was the friend to the muses. It is surely a friend to the graces. If it be the best time for study, it is also the best time for devotion. It is better to go from prayer to business than from business to prayer. Intercourse with God prepares us for our intercourse with our fellow-creatures; and for every occurrence, whether pleasing or painful. Who would go out in the morning, not knowing what a day may bring forth, and feeling his ignorance, and weakness, and depravity, and danger—without retiring first and committing himself to God? Boerhaave, the celebrated physician, rose early in the morning, and, through life, his practice was to retire an hour for private prayer and meditation. This, he often told his friends, gave him firmness and vigour for the business of the day. He commended it, therefore, from experience, as one of the best rules of life. The great Judge Hale, too, rose early, and retired for prayer, and read a portion of God's Word; without which, he said, nothing prospered with him all the day. But see the Lord of all!!—What did *He?*

April 26.—"*Sitting at the feet of Jesus.*"
Luke viii. 35.

— This was a place of nearness. Love longs to be near its attraction—and this man now loves his bene-

:tor, and feels his obligations to his pity and power.
— It was a place of safety. He naturally dreaded e return of the malady, and the devils gaining ssession of him again—he, therefore, keeps close his Deliverer.
— It was the place of instruction. The two :mer purposes might have been answered by his ting at the side of Jesus. But sitting at his feet, s the position and posture of a learner. "They : down at his feet," says Moses, when God was the top of Horeb, and the people at the bottom, d received of his words. Isaiah, speaking of Abra- m, says, "God called him to his feet." Martha d a sister, "who also sat at Jesus' feet." Saul of rsus "was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel." all these instances there is a reference to the cient and Eastern custom—when the master cupied a higher seat, and the scholars were sitting his feet—as hereby he had them in view, and ey were reminded, by their very place, of the verence and submission which became them, as rners.
This is the place we should all be found in. it how is it possible for us to sit at his feet now? e said, I am no more in the world: and the heavens ve received him till the restitution of all things. is true, he is no longer here, corporeally; but he here spiritually. He is not visible, but he is ssible; and—

"Where'er we seek Him he is found,
"And ev'ry place is holy ground."

e have his Throne, and his House, and his Word, d his ministers, and his ordinances—We have nself: for he has said, Lo! I am with you alway, en unto the end of the world. Where two or ree are gathered together in my Name, there am in the midst of them—*We* can, therefore, sit at

his feet. And, in recommendation of this place, let us observe the excellencies of the Master, and the advantages of his disciples; for the one involves the other.

And here we must not overlook the dignity of his character. A tutor seems to shed lustre over his pupils; and scholars have always prided themselves in the name of an illustrious preceptor. A young Israelitish prophet would have boasted in having been in the school of Samuel, or Elijah. How far did the Queen of Sheba come to hear the wisdom of Solomon!—But, behold, a greater than Solomon is here!—One fairer than the children of men—He is Lord of all. See that poor, despised Christian. He is debarred every seat of learning among men; but he is under a Divine instructor—such honour have all his saints. For so highly are they related; so peculiar is their destination; so sublime are the stations they are to fill, and the functions they are to discharge, as kings and priests unto God for ever; that their education is not entrusted to a creature—All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.

There is, also, the perfection of his ability. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Other teachers may be mistaken, and they may deceive us. They cannot, therefore, deserve our implicit and absolute confidence. But he does. He knows every thing, and every thing perfectly. We cannot, therefore, rely too much on his decisions—Heaven and earth may pass away; but His word shall not pass away.

There is the kindness of his manner. Men often discourage, and intimidate learners, by their distance, hastiness, and austerity. They have not long-suffering, and gentleness, and tenderness enough, to attract and attach the very soul of the pupil; to soften and shame him, if perverse; to fix him, if roving and volatile; to inspire him with confidence,

if timid; and to produce in him at once, that freedom and application of mind, so essential to improvement, and so incompatible with agitation and confusion of spirit. For something besides talent—and may we not say something beyond talent?—is required in a teacher. In proportion to the greatness of his knowledge, and the quickness and facility of his apprehension, a master will be tried, by the imperfections of his scholars: and the scholars will be the more liable to be abashed, and depressed. Conscious of their ignorance, and inability, and slowness, they will be reluctant, and afraid to give up themselves to such a superior tutor—unless he has other qualities: and such a tutor will not be very likely to waste, as he would suppose, *his* time and talents, upon such unpromising subjects. But *we* sit at the feet of One, whose condescension equals his greatness. He will stoop to teach me, even where I must *begin*. He will accommodate himself to my wants, and weakness. He will repeat his lessons. He will give me line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little—and upbraid not. Thus he taught his immediate disciples, as they were able to bear it, and loved them to the end, notwithstanding their mistakes and infirmities. And thus he said to his hearers, Learn of *me*, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Does he not refer to himself in these attributes as a motive, as well as an example? As much as to say, "You need not be afraid to place yourselves under my care—I will deal tenderly with you."

—There is also the efficiency of his tuition. None teaches like him. Other masters teach, but they cannot make their pupils learn. They can improve, but they cannot impart ability: and without some aptitude for an art or science, little progress will be made under the best efforts. What could Handel or Haydn have done with a clown, without any taste or ear for music? But Jesus gives

the capacity and the disposition he requires. He furnishes, not only the medium, but the faculty of vision. He makes the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. He gives us a new heart, and puts a new spirit within us, and causes us to walk in his statutes. And though, like the morning, we set off with a few rays only, our path is like that of the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

But oh! what are the instructions he gives! What is all other knowledge compared with this? Ask Paul: he was a man of genius and learning: he did not despise science—yet he exclaims, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Of other knowledge we may be destitute, and yet safe. But this is life eternal. Other knowledge leaves us as it finds us; yea, it often injures the possessor; and talent caters for depravity. But a man at his feet feels his words to be spirit and life. He is taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. In other cases, "In much wisdom, there is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow:" but, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." The burden of guilt is removed, and they enter into rest. They cast all their care on Him, who careth for them. Their minds are kept in perfect peace. They can not only bear, but enjoy solitude. Even in the midst of trouble they are revived; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God —How sweet are his words unto their taste! yea, sweeter than honey to their mouth!

No wonder, therefore, the disciple prizes his privilege; and cannot be seduced from his Master's feet. He has been taught the truth as it is in Jesus. He knows the truth; and the truth has made him free. And, therefore, upon the question, when others

are offended, "Will ye also go away?" he answers, with Peter—Where can we do so well? Lord, to whom shall we go? To sin? That has ruined us. To the world? That has deceived us. To the Heathen philosophers? Their foolish hearts are darkened. To the chief priests and Pharisees? They are the blind leading the blind. To the Law? That roars, and flames despair. To Moses? He wrote of thee. To thee gave all the prophets witness. Lord, to whom should we go, but unto thee? *Thou* hast the words of eternal life.

APRIL 27.—"*Members one of another.*"
1 Cor. xi. 20.

ALL mankind are joined together by a connexion which only death can dissolve. The remoteness of the situation in which we are placed does not hinder this connexion, but rather strengthens it—as we see in the traffic of different nations, and their mutual exchange of commodities. The inhabitants of one region cultivate the productions of the ground, and produce articles of manufacture for the use of those of another: and those of another do the same in return for them; and we sometimes find the four quarters of the globe in the furniture of one house, or the provisions of one table. The sea, which seemed likely to separate the dwellers upon earth, has, in the progress of science and arts, rendered them accessible to each other; and navigation has become the principal medium of trade.

There are various distinctions in life; and the Scripture does not discountenance them—neither are we to view them as selfish, or terminating only in the advantage of the superior ranks. The lowest are useful, as well as the highest. The rich benefit the

poor; and the poor labour for the rich. The king is the protector of his subjects; and every subject contributes to the support of the king—The king is served by the labour of the field. There is no such thing as independence; and were it not for ignorance and pride, we should never think of it. The under ranks are even the basis of the community: the lowest parts of the wall sustain the higher. The more we rise, and possess, the less claim have we to independence; as a larger building requires more support than a smaller. A nobleman employs a thousand hands; a peasant wants but two—and these are his own.

— If this reasoning be true as to men, it is more so as to Christians. And it is in this light Paul so frequently and largely speaks of it—"I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." To show how important it is to display a mutual dependence, he remarks—"The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." They have all their respective places and uses. Each is necessary; necessary to each, and necessary to the whole; necessary to the beauty, the strength, the happiness, the perfection of the whole—Why, then, should we set at nought a brother?

Yet the harmony is often broken, and a schism found in the body. The Christian Church would never have been reduced to its present disjointed state, if the members had not been beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ. The first wrong step took them to a distance from the Spirit; and as though Christ had been divided, and had imparted himself and his Gospel to some, exclusively of

others; the names of creatures became noted as the sources from which particular doctrines were derived, and by whom particular modes of discipline were established. The words the Holy Ghost used, were less regarded than the words which man's wisdom teacheth. The worthy Name by which Christians were originally called, was no longer sufficient. They ranged themselves under different leaders, and called "Rabbi;" forgetting who had forbidden this; and that one was their Master, even Christ, while all they were only brethren. Hence feuds and animosities followed; and the professors of meekness itself learned to bite and devour one another. The consequences of such measures are known and felt even at the present day: and though much of the violence of religious parties has subsided, distinctions unscriptural, and unnecessary, (in the degree, if not in the existence) are supported; and though all hold the same head, the members of one communion often look for no more honour and assistance from those of another, than if they were not of the body.

But "if the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" "But now are they many members, yet but one body;" "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

— Christians are not only so many members in a natural body, but as so many members in a civil, or domestic state. However different and distant they were by nature from each other, an effectual

method has been taken by Divine Grace to bring them together. They are reconciled in one body on the Cross. They are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Therefore they are one in Christ, by obligation, as well as by connexion and dependence. Christ over his own house, has a right to enact a law, for the well-ordering and governing of those placed under him. This law is clearly contained in the Scripture; and vain is every other proof of our belonging to him, unless we obey it. And what says He? "Then are ye my disciples, if ye love one another." According to this, we must not live to ourselves—Each is to live for the good of each, and of all. Even a gratification, harmless in itself, is to be avoided, if the peace of a weak conscience will thereby be destroyed. Such was the example of Paul: yea, and of Christ also—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

"Now, by the bowels of my God,
"His sharp distress, his sore complaints,
"By his last groans, his dying blood,
"I charge my soul to love the saints."

APRIL 28.—"*When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.*" John xiii. 1.

—"HIS hour" means the period of his death. In another place it is called the hour of his enemies —"This," said he, "is *your* hour and the power

f darkness." It is called *their* hour, because they emed to have every thing their own way. They pprehended him; and mocked and scourged him; nd nailed him to the cross. All their purposes and ishes succeeded; and they considered his cause as nnihilated. But their triumph was short and foolish. What they had done was provided for; was admitted into his plan; and the very means of ccomplishing his design—

— It was "*His* hour." He was delivered by he determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. There was nothing casual in his death. The me was appointed; and till this arrived the ttempts of his adversaries were vain—"They could ot lay hands on him, because his hour was not et come." It was not only *his* hour by appointment, but by importance. No such hour had been witnessed since time had commenced. No hour f his own life would bear a comparison with it. t was infinitely unique, wonderful, and interesting, n its design and effects. Now was the judgment f this world. Now was the prince of this world ast out. Now was the ceremonial law abolished. Now was the moral law magnified and made honourble. Now he was to finish transgression; now e was to bring in everlasting righteousness. Now e was to open the kingdom of heaven to all elievers. Now he was to get himself a Name bove every name.

— He *knew* that his hour was come—and so erfect was his foresight of the event, that he knew ot only the fact itself, but the incidents attending ; and knew the whole before there was any appearnce of the thing: before his enemies had formed the esign; before Judas had felt the thought of treason. nd thus he evinced his devotedness to his work. Ie saw the hour was at hand, but he seeks no iding-place, nor attempts to escape, though he ad so many means in his power. It does not

affect this to say, that in another sense he was unable to have released himself; because he was bound by covenant engagement; and if he saved others, himself he could not save. For his engagement was made in the full prospect of all he was to endure; and as the tremendous suffering approached, so far was he from repenting of what he had brought upon himself, that he said, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

— But how is his passage through this dreadful scene expressed? "That he should depart out of this world unto the Father." Here let us think of his people as well as of himself. In all things he must have the pre-eminence; but they resemble him. What is here said of his death, will, in a pleasing degree, apply to their own. Their death is not, indeed, like his, mediatorial: neither know they the hour when it will take place. But all their times are in God's hand; and the circumstances of their death, as well as of their life, fall under his arrangement—They know they have their hour; and are immortal till it arrives. They know that enemies cannot hasten it; that friends cannot retard it. They know also that it is approaching; that it cannot be far off; that it may be very near—and therefore that it requires a constant readiness.

But was *his* death a "departing out of this world?" So is theirs. He was in it for three and thirty years. Many of them are in it a shorter, and many a much longer period. It was a sad world to him. It knew him not, but despised and rejected him. It hated him without a cause. It persecuted him from his birth, refused him a place where to lay his head, and could not be satisfied till it had shed his blood. And *they* find it a vain and deceitful world; a vexing and injurious world; a vile and wicked world. Every thing in it cries, Arise, and depart hence; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted. And are we unwilling? Yes—

"Thankless for favours from on high,
"Man thinks he fades too soon;
"Though 'tis his privilege to die,
"Would he improve the boon.

"But he, not wise enough to scan
"His best concerns aright,
"Would gladly stretch life's little span
"To ages, if he might—

"To ages, in a world of pain—
"To ages, where he goes,
"Gall'd by affliction's heavy chain,
"And hopeless of repose.

"Strange fondness of the human heart,
"Enamour'd of its harm!
"Strange world, that costs it so much smart,
"And yet has pow'r to charm!"

lo not wonder, indeed, that this should be so
i the case with "men of the world." They have
r portion in this life," and no hope of a better.
as it is, they know that it is the best world
will ever be in; and that whatever be its
les, to them they are only the beginnings of
w. But it is otherwise with Christians. They
ıere, like Israel in Egypt; and death is their
:ture for the Land of Promise. They are like
gers in an inhospitable country, and travellers
:heerless inn: and death is their departing to
delightful home.

Was *his* death a "going to the Father?" So is
s. That is, going to heaven; for the Father
ere: and in his presence there is fulness of joy,
at his right hand there are pleasures for ever-
. He went to the Father, to carry on their
:, and to possess his own reward; but he had
there before. Hence he said, "I came forth
the Father, and am come into the world; again,
ve the world, and go unto the Father." Hence
eaks of heaven, without wonder. He had been
urt. He had resided there, and had only left
r a season. His return, with all the glories

that should follow, was the joy set before him, for which he endured the Cross. And, as love delights in the welfare of its object, he expected that his disciples would rejoice, when he said, "I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I." But they were never there before: all will be new, and surprising to them. Yet they, also, will have their work, and will be still praising him. They, also, will drink of the rivers of his pleasure. They will have immediate and uninterrupted access to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. And with Him is the fountain of life.

April 29.—"*And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*" Luke xxii. 43.

Thus, though the cup was not taken from him, he was heard, in that he feared, according to the promise: "I have heard thee in a time accepted; and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." We may be heard, when we are not delivered; and succoured in distress, when we are not saved from it. And if the burden be not diminished, yet, if our ability to endure it be increased, the effect is the same. Paul was a witness of this. When he besought the Lord thrice, that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, the Saviour said, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. And says David, In the day that I cried, Thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.

—Here we see the humiliation of the Saviour. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. He was in the form of God, but took upon him the form of a servant. He was Lord of all, but had not where to lay his head, and was relieved by the

reatures of his power: "Certain women which ad been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, alled Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, nd Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, nd Susanna, and many others, ministered unto im of their substance." He was the Lord of ngels, but he was made a little lower than they; ea, he received assistance from them—"There ppeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthning him."

— What a contrast is here! His Apostles, who ad been so much honoured by him, forsook him: nd even Peter, James, and John, who had been dmitted to the Transfiguration, and now were elected to be with him in the garden, slumbered nd slept. And though, when he came to them, nd found them in this condition, he pitied them, nd said, The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh s weak: yet he felt it—deeply felt it; and said, 'What! could ye not watch with me one hour?"— But if earth disowns him, Heaven does not. If nen abandon him, angels cry with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb!—"He was seen of angels." One of them announced his approaching conception; nother proclaimed his birth: a multitude of them arolled his advent. In his temptation in the Wilderness, "behold, angels came and ministered nto him." An angel rolled away the stone from he door of the sepulchre, and said to the women, 'Fear not *ye*, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which vas crucified: he is not here;" "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And here "an angel ppeared unto him from heaven, strengthening him."

He could have asked the Father, and he would ave given him twelve legions of angels, and rescued im—What are we saying? *One* of these would ave been sufficient—the least of them could have ooked all his adversaries into nothing—But how hen could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it

must be? And how could he have put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? Or how could he have sympathised with us, if he had never suffered? The angel, therefore, only *strengthened him.* Reminding him of the joy that was set before him: telling him of the result of his passion—the effect of it in the glory of God, and the salvation of the world: spreading before him the promises—perhaps reading to him the prophecy of Isaiah, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied"—Raising him up from the cold ground; supporting his fainting head; wiping away the bloody sweat from his dear face—So that he appeared fresh, and fair, and glorious in his visage; and made those who came to apprehend him go backward, and fall to the earth, when he only presented himself, and said, "I am he."

— In all things he has the pre-eminence; and how willing are his people to acknowledge it! But while he is the first-born among many brethren, all of them are predestinated to be conformed to him. Angels, therefore, who attended him, attend them also. "Are they not all ministering sprits, sent forth to minister unto them that are the heirs of salvation?" Their attendance is no less real than formerly, though it is no longer visible, according to the principle of the Economy under which we live, and which is, to walk by faith, and not by sight. They delight to do the will of their Lord and ours. These blessed beings have no envy, no pride. They are enemies to his enemies; but they are friends to his friends. They rejoice when a sinner repenteth: and carry the dying saint into Abraham's bosom.

APRIL 30.—"*But go your way; tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*"
Mark xvi. 7.

THESE are the words of the angel who had descended from heaven to attend his rising Lord. They were addressed to Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome. These women had honoured the Saviour; and he honoured them. They were the first to receive the announcement of his resurrection, and the first to report it.

But observe, they were to carry the news, not to the chief priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees; not to Pilate; not to Herod. It was just to leave these men in the darkness they loved. They rebelled against the light; and no evidence would have convinced those who had already seen his miracles, and believed not. But his disciples, though timid, and weak, and imperfect, were sincere. They had forsaken all to follow him. Their very doubting arose from the greatness of their love; and sorrow had now filled their hearts. They would, therefore, welcome the intelligence, and be influenced by it, as his followers and witnesses.

— But why is Peter distinctively mentioned? Because he was the chief of the Apostles? So far from it, the distinction reminds us of his humiliation. He had fallen by his iniquity; and after the most solemn warnings and professions, he had denied his Master, with oaths and curses. But the look in the judgment-hall had broken his heart, and made him go out, and weep bitterly. He was now on the verge of despair, and ready to say—perhaps was even now saying—Ah! he will disown me—and righteously—for ever! The angel's *naming* him, therefore, on this occasion, was as much as to say, The Saviour has not cast thee off; he has not forgotten to be gracious; he does not break a bruised reed, nor

quench the smoking flax, but will send forth judgment unto victory—while it conveyed an intimation to his brethren, that they were to follow his example, and endeavour to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves, lest they also were tempted.

— The message, more than announcing his resurrection, added, that he would go before them into Galilee. In vain we ask, how he passed thither. He had the power to appear, and disappear; and to transport himself from place to place, as he pleased, in a moment of time. But what led him down so many miles from Jerusalem? Was it to intimate his forsaking that guilty city? Woe unto you when I depart from you!—Or was it to call them off from the strife and cruelty of their enemies? It was comparatively a place of security and concealment.—Or was it, that their journeying down separately, or with each other, might bring them to recollection, and recover them from their late cowardice and unbelief?—Was it to tell them to withdraw, in order to be in the way of intercourse with him? It was a despised place—would he teach them to rise above local and vulgar prejudices; and to call nothing common or unclean? It is certain that he had been much in Galilee himself; and had many followers there. And this accounts for the largeness of the assembly: for the Apostles would naturally inform his friends there of this expected interview. Hence he was now seen of above five hundred brethren at once; many of whom were living, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, though some had fallen asleep.

— His promise, that they should see him there, would prove a test of their faith and affection. If they valued the sight of him, and believed his word, they would certainly repair thither. Accordingly they did repair thither; and there was he!—Let us apply this to ourselves. There are means and ordi-

nances which he has established. In these he has engaged to be found of those that seek him. If we rely on his truth, and desire communion with him, we shall gladly avail ourselves of them. And shall we—can we be disappointed—if we do? Has he ever said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain? He has often been better than his word; but who ever found him worse? Let us go, therefore, to his Throne, and to his House, with full and lively expectation—In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee; for where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them. There shall we see him, as he has said unto us.

— He is also gone before us into heaven. Let us arise, and depart hence, and seek him *there*—*There* shall we see him in all his glory, according to his promise—Where I am, there shall also my servants be. Oh! to join him there! To be for ever with the Lord!

"O glorious hour! O bless'd abode!
"I shall be near, and like my God:
"And flesh and sin no more control
"The sacred pleasures of my soul."

MAY 1.—"*And I will give her her vineyards from thence.*" Hosea ii. 15.

— OBSERVE the author of these favours—*I* will do it, says God. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from him: and his people will readily acknowledge that all they enjoy is not only from his agency, but his grace.

— Observe also the richness of the supplies—I

will give her—not her corn—corn is for necessity, but grapes—grapes are for delight. Yea, it is not a vine—but a vineyard—yea, vineyards! He engages to give, as if he could not do too much for them; being concerned—not only for their safety, but for their welfare—not only for their relief, but enjoyment—and not only for their tasting his consolation, but their being filled with all joy and peace in believing.

— Observe also the strangeness of the way in which these indulgences are to be communicated. For *whence* are these supplies to come? From a *wilderness.* "I will allure her and bring her into the *wilderness*, and speak comfortably unto her: and I will give her her vineyards from *thence.*" What could be looked for in a wilderness but loneliness, and mazes, and danger, and beasts of prey, and reptiles, and sand, and briers, and thorns—Who would expect to find the vineyards of Engedi there? But "He only doeth wonderous things; he is God alone." He turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He makes rivers in high places, and streams in the desert. He makes the wilderness to rejoice, and blossom as the rose—and gives us vineyards from *thence.*

The region through which his people passed in their way from Egypt to Canaan, was a wilderness. Here read the words of Jeremiah, "Who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts, and of pits, and of the shadow of death; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." Moses also calls it, That terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water. But He gave them their vineyards from thence. Though the place yielded them nothing, they were well supplied from above. Though they had no rivers or springs, he smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and followed them

. all their journeyings. Though they had no food, ıe clouds poured down manna, and they did eat ıgels' food. Though they had no road, they had guide to lead them the right way, in a cloud of re which shaded them by day, and comforted them t night. The tabernacle of God was in the midst f them. From the mercy-seat he communed with ıem. He sent them Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam. Ie gave his good Spirit to instruct them. They ad grapes from Eshcol. They had a view of the lory of all lands; and at length the possession of ;—where they sang—"To Him that led his people hrough the Wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ver!"

— Earth is a wilderness. And he gives them heir vineyards from thence. It was not designed o be a wilderness. But, by one man, sin entered nto the world; and it was said to the transgressor, 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt hou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, nd thistles, shall it bring forth to thee"—and there re enough of these—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,
"That yields us no supply:
"No cheering fruit, no wholesome trees,
"Or streams of living joy.

"But pricking thorns, through all the ground,
"And mortal poisons, grow;
"And all the rivers that are found
"With dang'rous waters flow."

Such it is as the Fall left it. Such it now would be, but for Divine grace. How discontented and miserable are the men of the world, who have nothing else! especially in their afflictions—and man is born to trouble. But to the Christian the curse is turned into a blessing. He has not only before him a land of promise, but even now—even here, he has a

thousand alleviations, and succours, and even delights.

"The men of grace have found
"Glory begun below;
"And heav'nly fruits on earthly ground
"From faith and hope may grow."

And if earth *be* a wilderness—when they attend divine ordinances; and hear the joyful sound; and embrace the promises; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost—they have their vineyards from thence.

Solitude is a wilderness. And He gives them their vineyards from thence. There is not only much to be done alone, but gained alone, and enjoyed alone. There we gain much of our best knowledge, and our richest experience. There we enjoy the freedom of prayer, and the most unreserved intercourse with God. There his secret is with them that fear him; and he shews them his Covenant. They are never less alone than when alone. "Go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee." David said, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." Nathanael under the fig-tree found something more refreshing than the shade of its leaf; more delicious than the taste of its fruit.

Outward trouble is a wilderness. Many have been afraid to be brought into it—yet He has given them their vineyards from thence, aud the Valley of Achor for a door of hope. They have been saved by their undoing; and enriched by their losses. Manasseh, in his affliction, sought, and found the God of his father. And David, though he was converted before, could say, It is good for me that I have been afflicted. What proofs have all his people had that He was with them in trouble! What discoveries! what supports! what tendernesses

of comfort have they had there! As the sufferings of Christ have abounded in them, the consolation hath also abounded by Christ.

— The state of mind produced by conviction of sin is a wilderness. A wounded spirit who can bear? Who does not remember the surprise, the confusion of mind, the terror, the anguish, the self-despair, he once felt—and who can forget the feelings induced by a discovery of the Cross, and the joy of God's salvation! Many are afraid when they see their relations and friends trembling at God's Word, and broken in heart at his feet—But Christians hail it, as a token for good. They know that he gave *them their* vineyards from thence.

The same may be said of that soul-abasement and distress the believer himself may feel, from increasing views of his unworthiness, depravity, and guilt. And this may be the case, and often will be the case, after he has been for years in the way everlasting, and hoping better things of himself. This is truly lamentable and humbling—but will the humiliation hurt him? He giveth grace unto the humble. The rain falls upon the mountain-tops, as well as in the valley—but the valleys are fertilized; they are also covered over with corn; they shout for joy; they also sing.

"The more his glories strike mine eyes,
"The humbler I shall lie.
"But—while *I* sink, my *joys* shall rise
"Unmeasurably high."

— The valley of the shadow of death is the last wilderness. There is much to render it uninviting and awful; and yet, when it has been actually entered, the apprehension and the gloom have fled. This has been the case generally, even with those who were most subject to bondage by the fear of it. The place has been made glad for them.

They have had not only a peaceful, but a delightful entrance into the joy of their Lord. And what vineyards does He give them from THENCE!!

MAY 2.—*A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David.*" Ps. xxx.

THIS he built for himself, as soon as he was established king over Judah and Israel. It was, doubtless, very different from the cottage he occupied when a shepherd. But there was no impropriety in this. A man may alter his mode of living, with his rising condition in the world. The gradations of life are not discountenanced in the Scriptures: and we have never seen any advantage arising from the neglect of them. Good men ought to avoid extravagance; but by being mean or parsimonious, they may cause their good to be evil spoken of.

David, as a king, was obliged to do many things from a regard to his station, rather than from personal choice. Yet godliness is to shew itself in all circumstances. Therefore, when he took possession of his dwelling-place, he consecrated it to God. At entering a new house, an entertainment is often given, and dissipation and excess follow. Many are invited; but God is not of the number—yea, they say unto God, Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. But every thing is to be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. Our religion is to be exemplified in little and common things. We are to sanctify the week, as well as to remember the Sabbath: and to walk with a perfect heart in our own dwellings, as well as to worship in the Temple of God. All we have is the Lord's; and nothing is a blessing

till he blesses it. And we know not what may befall us in our new abode. Here our children may be about us; or here we may weep, because they are not. Here we may find a house of mourning, for the desire of our eyes, or the guide of our youth. Here we may enjoy health, or be made to possess months of vanity, and have wearisome nights appointed unto us. Here we may live many years, or our sun may go down at noon—Let it, then, be our concern, that the place may be the House of God while we live, and the Gate of Heaven when we die.

David was a poet; and was accustomed to indulge his pious genius on any particular occurrence. Here are the lines he composed on the present occasion—"I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

All we notice here, is, that previously to his occupying this fine mansion, he had been suffering under a dangerous disease. Kings are as mortal as their subjects, and exposed to the same evils of life. And what would a house of cedar be to one who carried into it a body full of pain? But God had recovered him speedily; and while renewed health enabled him to enjoy the blessings of Providence, Divine Grace taught him to value life, as a privilege for religious purpose; prolonging his opportunities, to glorify God, and serve his generation according to His will.

Nothing is more interesting than little casual

insights into the history, and, above all, the experience of good and great men. And in this ode we see the workings of David's mind—before, and—under, and—after the affliction.

— *Before* the affliction: "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong"—He had not said this in words; but his views, and feelings, and actions, were all vocal with God. And do we not here see the danger of indulgence? How little can we bear without self-security, without presumption, without losing the heart of a stranger! Hence the necessity of a change, and the advantage of those trials that cry to our hearts, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest."

— *Under* the affliction: "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. I cried to thee, O Lord: and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper." Cain, in his distress, goes to building. Saul sends for music. Few turn to Him that smiteth them. But prayer is the design, the sanctification, the resource, of affliction—Is any afflicted, let him pray.

— *After* the affliction: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." He has done it—

> "His hand has loos'd my bonds of pain,
> "And bound me with his love."

Therefore I will serve him with my best powers, and for ever—

And his practice corresponded with his profession. No sooner had he taken possession of his new

, than "the king said unto Nathan the prophet, ow, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the f God dwelleth within curtains." And then that he availed himself of a pious and ardent of mind, to *swear* unto the Lord, and *vow* he mighty God of Jacob. "Surely I will not into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up ny bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, mber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place e Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of " How different the disposition of the selfish on their return from Babylon! "Is it time u, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and ouse lie waste?" And what gained they? that honour me, says God, I will honour. looked for much, and, lo! it came to little; hen ye brought it home I did blow upon it. saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine that is waste, and ye run every man unto n house."

AY 3.—"*To reveal his Son in me.*" Gal. i. 16.

veal, is to lay open something which, though stence before, was yet unknown. The know- of the Son of God is necessary to all the e can make of him. And we may observe a ld revelation of him. The text only speaks e of these: but they are all true; and they profitable.

ere is a revelation of the Saviour *to* us. This nd in the Scripture, which therefore we often mphatically "revelation." It discovers many ; but he is the principal subject: and we rsuaded nothing has found a place in it, but

has some relation to him. This revelation early began. It dawned in Paradise, and the light continued to shine more and more unto the perfect day. All the Jewish ordinances and sacrifices prefigured him. Of him, Moses, in the Law and the Prophets, did write: and the testimony of Jesus was the Spirit of Prophecy. He came personally as a preacher, and he was his own subject. He unbosomed himself to his disciples, as far as they were able to bear it; and promised them a fuller manifestation. This was done when the Holy Spirit taught them all things; and brought all things to their remembrance that he had said unto them; and inspired them, to communicate the information to others—that all may read and understand their knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

There is a revelation of the Saviour *in* us. This is more than the former. Many who have access to the Scriptures, will perish; and all their knowledge will only prove the savour of death unto death. There is, however, as to information, nothing in the internal revelation that is not in the external. It is not, therefore, a new revelation in itself: for the truths themselves are as old as the Creation; but it is new as to our perception and experience. If a man, born blind, were to receive his sight, he would not see a new sun, but it would be new to him. Even in a land of vision, we may be called out of darkness into his marvellous light; because the eyes of our understanding may be opened. We heard of these things before, but now, in God's light, we see them. This illumination shews us, not only their reality, but their excellency; and, with their glory, fixes, and replenishes, and sways the soul. Be not satisfied with any thing short of this. Distinguish between a Christian in name, and a Christian indeed. Do not place your religion on any thing without you. Have you the witness in yourselves? Is Christ

revealed in you? Have you such a sight of him, by faith, as to see that he is fairer than the children of men? as to feel him infinitely endeared? as to count all things but loss, for the excellency of his knowledge? This is what he himself means, when he said, "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life."

There is a revelation of him *by* us. It is our destiny, our duty, our privilege, to make him known. This is done by our being the subjects of his Agency; as the work displays the attributes of the author, and the streams proclaim the quality of the fountain. We should discover him by our resemblance, as his followers; and by our testimony, as his witnesses. We can speak upon other subjects—why not upon this? Who has not opportunities to extol him among children, servants, friends, neighbours? What do seeking souls want, but to see Jesus? Or doubting ones, but to be assured of his love? Have we been freely healed by him? Let us tell the diseased and dying of the Physician. Let us zealously aid every institution that aims to shew forth his praise. Pray that his glory may be revealed, and that all flesh may see the salvation of our God.

There is also a revelation of him *with* us. The world knoweth us not: it knew him not. We are now hid, and he is hid; and both are to be displayed at the same time. The day of the manifestation of the sons of God is also the revelation of Jesus Christ. And when he, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. They suffered with him, and they shall be glorified together.

We wish to be distinguished. We want something exclusive—half the relish and value is gone, if others share with us. But *his* benevolence, *his* condescension, are such that he cannot be satisfied unless we partake with him: "I appoint unto

you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—But where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?

MAY 4.—"*For even Christ pleased not himself.*" Rom. xv. 3.

—NOT as if his undertaking our cause was against his will; or that he ever felt it to be a task, and a grievance. He was voluntary in the engagement, and cheerful in the execution; and could say, I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!—But he never followed the indulgence of his natural inclination in the days of his flesh. He preferred the glory of God and our benefit, to his own gratification. He did not consult his ease; but denied the demands of sleep, when duty required exertion. He rejected, with anger, Peter's proposal to spare himself from suffering. He did not consult ambitious feeling; but refused the people, when they would have made him a king. He stood not upon rank and consequence; but washed the disciples' feet, and was among them as one that serveth. He was far more delighted with Mary's reception of his Word, than with Martha's preparation for his appetite. He was not only thirsty, but hungry, when the disciples left him at the well, to go and buy meat; but when they returned, and said, Master, eat; he replied, "I have meat to eat which ye know not of—In your absence I have had something above corporeal satisfaction—I have been saving a soul

from death, and hiding a multitude of sins—My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." When the collectors of the Temple-tax came to Peter, he said to him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free—The Temple is the house of my heavenly Father, and I am his only begotten Son." But, though not bound like others, he foregoes his right, in order to avoid offence: "Nevertheless, lest we should offend;" *i. e.* excite pain, or dislike, or reflection, by their thinking we have not a proper regard to the Sanctuary and ordinances of God—"lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." This he exemplified all through life: He was, therefore, well prepared, and authorised to say, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

—And observe the use the Apostle makes of it—Because Christ pleased not himself, therefore "let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves"—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." He, indeed, limits the duty. We are not to humour our brethren in a sinful course; but only in things innocent and lawful—and we are to do this with a view to secure and promote his welfare, and not any advantage of our own. But we are not to consult our own little conveniences, and appetites, and wishes. We are not even to follow our convictions in every disputed matter. "Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am per-

suaded, by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." Here, again, the Apostle calls in Jesus, as a motive, and an example—He denied himself so as to die for this weak brother, and will you, says he, refuse to deny yourselves in a trifling forbearance on his behalf? "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

Herein, too, Paul enjoins no more than he practised; for he drank deep into the Saviour's spirit—"I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." If "meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." And how noble does he here look! And how below his principles does a Christian act, when he thinks of himself only; his own accommodation—yea, even his own conscience. He is to regard the satisfaction of another's mind, as well as his own; and is to walk, not only righteously, but charitably. Yet some say, "*I* do not *think* it sinful; therefore I am not obliged to abstain"—And was Paul obliged to abstain? All things were pure to him; but he would not eat with offence. Some seem never to regard how their conduct will affect others: but the Scripture says, "Give none offence; neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." Asaph was checked in his improper language by remembering, that if he so spake, he should "offend against the generation of the upright." Let us, therefore, beware of throwing stumblingblocks in the way of the blind. Let us make straight paths for our feet,

lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

— Christianity is designed to refine and soften; to take away the heart of stone, and to give us hearts of flesh; to polish off the rudenesses and arrogances of our manners and tempers; and to make us blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke. Lord Chatham, in one of his Letters to his Nephew, finely says, "Politeness is benevolence in little things." Religion should make us the most polite creatures in the world; and what persons of rank do from education, we should do from principle; yielding our own desires and claims to become all things to all men, if by any means we may gain some: and be not only sincere, but without offence, until the day of Christ.

— If so, some professors of religion have much to learn. They think of nothing but their own indulgence. They know nothing of bearing with infirmity; of waiting for improvement; of watching for opportunity. They are decisive, and dictatorial, and hasty, and severe. They pride themselves only on what they call faithfulness, and which is the easiest thing in religion to them, because it falls in with their own natural temper—not to say, that frequently what they mean by fidelity is only rudeness and insolence. But while we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, we are required to be courteous; and to pursue whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report.

— And without this, professors will not only render religion unamiable and repulsive; but will lower themselves in general estimation, and lose the influence which is derivable from reputation and esteem. Who can regard the haughty, and the selfish? But for a good man some would even dare to die. An inoffensive, self-denying, lovely disposition and carriage wins the heart. It is not in our power to love; but it is in our power to be

loved. Our loving another depends upon him; and here we have no control: but another's loving us, depends upon ourselves; and he that will have friends, must shew himself friendly.

Doddridge buried a most interesting child at nine years of age. The dear little creature was a general favourite: and he tells us in his Funeral Sermon, that when he one day asked her, how it was that every body loved her—I know not, she said, unless it be that I love every body. Tell your children this. Also read to them—"The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."

"For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us, therefore, follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

MAY 5.—"*If thou knewest the gift of God.*" John iv. 10.

As if he had said to the woman—Thou mistakest me for a mere Jew, wandering, and weary, and sitting thus on the well, and asking for the refreshment of water, seemingly dependent on the kindness of a stranger. But if thou wert acquainted with me—that I am the Mercy promised from the beginning; the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; that I am come into the world to save sinners; and that in me all fulness dwells—what an opportunity wouldest thou find was now afforded thee—"if thou knewest the gift of God"—

He calls himself the *gift of God*, because he came not according to the course of nature. A body was prepared him. A virgin conceives, and

bears a Son; and the holy thing born of her is called, The Son of God.—We go also further. A preternatural interposition might have taken place in a way of wrath; and this is what seemed most probable in the case, and would have been the foreboding of our guilty minds. But God sent not his only begotten Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He therefore came, not according to any rule of desert. A few years ago, we heard much of the rights of man; and though the expression was abused, and brought into contempt, there is a propriety in it. Man has rights, with regard to his fellow-creatures. Children have rights, with regard to parents; and subjects, with regard to sovereigns. A man has a right to enjoy the fruit of his labour; he has a right to worship the Supreme Being according to his conscience. But what were his rights with regard to God? What right to protection has a subject that has become rebellious? What right to wages has a servant that has run away from his master? As sinners, we had forfeited all expectation from God—except a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation. We could have no right to the bread we eat, or the air we breathe. What claim, then, had we upon God for the Son of his love? He was a gift infinitely free; and not only free as opposed to desert, but also as opposed to desire. Was he withholden till we felt our need of him, and became suppliants at our offended Maker's feet? Ages before we were born, the plan was formed, and accomplished, and announced. And when we are desirous of obtaining the blessings of it, we find them provided; and hear a voice, saying, Come, for all things are now ready. All other good, too, is insured by him. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Yea, he has given us all things in him; and whatever

a perishing sinner needs, even to life eternal, is to be derived from him.

— And if you *knew* the gift of God—surely you would say, with the Apostle, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." You should overlook nothing in his bounty: but gratitude should bear some proportion to the favour it acknowledges. What is the sun in Nature, to this Sun of Righteousness! What is our daily bread, to this Bread of Life! Here are the exceeding riches of his grace—in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus.

— If you knew the gift of God, surely you would avail yourselves of it. You would consider a participation of him as the one thing needful. You would receive him as he is presented in the Gospel; and as Zaccheus received him, who made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

— If you knew the gift of God, you would not yield to despondency. You would not say, by way of objection, I have no money, no worthiness. This is supposed. Who thinks of buying a gift? of deserving a gift? especially such a gift!

— If you knew the gift of God, you would make him known. You would commend him to your children, your relations, your friends, your neighbours—You would pray, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory"—

> "His worth if all the nations knew,
> "Sure the whole earth would love him too."

MAY 6.—"*Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.*"
2 Sam. vii. 27.

WHERE did he find his inclination, and power to pray? "In his heart." The heart is every thing

in religion. Man judgeth according to the outwa appearance; but the Lord looketh to the hear and requires it—My son, give me thy heart. Whe he does not find this, *He* finds nothing. Whe *this* speaks, words are needless: he knows wh is the mind of the spirit. Hannah—she spake her heart; only her lips moved, but her voi was not heard—yet what a prayer she prayed! a how successful! It is a blessed thing, therefore, find it in our heart to pray—so that, while it with many a bodily exercise only; a task which th would gladly decline; an effort forced upon the from something without—some danger, or troubl we may do it naturally; and therefore constant and pleasantly, from a principle in us, like a w of water, springing up into everlasting life.

And what was the prayer he found there? It w *this*—"Let the house of thy servant David established before thee." David had a peculiar co cern for his family; and, from his character, may be assured, he wished it to be not only or prin pally glorious, but good. It is a man's duty to se to promote the temporal welfare of his house; f he that provideth not for his own, especially tho of his own house, hath denied the faith, and worse than an Infidel. But the wish of many is n to build up their house in Israel, but in the worl They are only anxious for an increase of earth wealth and honour. And how injurious have su risings in life proved to the comfort and the religi of the family. And how inconsiderate and inco sistent are parents, especially if they are pious on in longing for such perils, when they know t depravity of human nature, and the snares of pr perity. How much better is it to see, and to lea their household great in the sight of the Lord; a under the blessing of that Providence which w make all things work together for their good.

And what produced *this* prayer? "*Therefore*" —"For thou, O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house:" "*therefore* hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." He had refused him the pleasure and honour of building the Temple which he had purposed. But he should be no loser. The will should be taken for the deed. Though he did not build God a house, God would build him a house—and except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it. But all things are possible with him: and them that honour him, he will honour. What the king said to his prime minister—"You mind my affairs, and I will mind yours"—he says to each of his servants: Serve me yourselves, and be persuaded that my blessing is upon my people, and that the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

— But see—the certainty of a thing does not supersede the use of the means in attaining it. Why should David pray for it, when God had pledged himself to do it? So some would argue: but it would be the arguing of folly. The Scripture, the wisdom of God, knows nothing of this perversion. No doctrine there leads to enthusiasm. There the means and end are connected. There activity grows out of dependence; and zeal, out of confidence. There God says, after he has promised the thing, "I will yet be enquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them." Yea, we see prayer is not only consistent with the promise, but derived from it. It is this that furnishes the matter of our petitions, and gives us all our encouragements.

Therefore, let us be thankful for the promises. Let us search them out. Let us place them opposite all our wants. Let us plead them, and say, Remember the Word unto thy servant, upon which thou *hast* caused him to hope. And, as *then* we can

ask in faith, so we may pray with confidence: for whatsoever we ask according to his will, we know he heareth us.

MAY 7.—"*The Sun of Righteousness shall arise.*" Mal. iv. 2.

HE is called the Sun of Righteousness, to intimate that he is the same in the righteous world as the orb of day is in the natural. The importance of the latter is acknowledged by all; but the value of the former is infinitely greater: for what are the interests of time and sense, to those of the soul and eternity!

We know there is only one sun in our system: and there is one Mediator between God and man. Neither is there salvation in any other—I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.—The vastness of the sun is surprising: but Jesus is the Lord of all. His greatness is unsearchable. The beauty and glory of the sun are such, that, in the absence of Revelation, and when creatures were idols, we can scarcely wonder that this illustrious display of Deity should have been adored. But He is fairer than the children of men—Yea, he is altogether lovely; and all the angels of God are commanded to worship him.—But consider the inestimable usefulness of this luminary! How he enlightens! warms! fructifies! adorns! blesses! What changes does he produce! How he fills the air with songs, and the gardens with fruit and fragrance! How he clothes the woods with foliage, and the meadows with grass! How he fills the valleys with corn, and makes the little hills rejoice on every side; and crowns the year with his goodness!—And this he has always done. The sun that ripened

Isaac's corn, ripens ours; and, though he has shone for so many ages, he is undiminished, and is as all-sufficient as ever. What an image of Him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! who has always been the source of light, life, relief, and comfort! the hope, the consolation of Israel! the desire of all nations! Truly light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. But he that seeth the Sun of Righteousness, and believeth on Jesus, hath everlasting life.

— The *rising* of the sun is the finest spectacle in the creation. I fear some never saw it; at least at the most interesting season of the year. What, to them, are a thousand rising suns, to the sublimity of lying late in bed! But when and how does this Sun of Righteousness arise? His coming was announced immediately after the Fall, when God said, the seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head. This was the very first beam of the early dawn of that light which was to shine more and more unto the perfect day.—His approach obscurely appeared in the types and services of the Ceremonial Law. In the clearer discoveries of the Prophets, the morning was beginning to spread upon the mountains. But to the Jews he was below the horizon: they longed to see his day; and kings and righteous men pressed forward to the brightness of his rising. At length, he actually arose; and when the fulness of time was come—God sent forth his Son. A messenger from heaven proclaimed him to the shepherds, and said, I bring you glad tidings of great joy. The Saviour is born! Oh! the splendour of that morning!—It brought glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men—GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

— He rises in the dispensation of the Gospel. Whenever this enters a nation or a village, *He* is *evidently* set forth, and the savour of his knowledge

diffused. It is then said to the place, and to the people, Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

— He rises in spiritual illumination. Then he is revealed in us. He is presented to the eye of the soul. He is seen in a new manner, so as to fix and fill the mind, and govern the life.

— He rises in renewed manifestations. For sometimes he hides his face, and we are troubled. Then we anxiously ask, O when wilt Thou come unto me? Then we wait for him more than they that watch for the morning—and when we behold him again, find a brighter day.

— He rises in ordinances. What fresh and enlivening views of him have we often in meditation, and prayer; in his own Supper; in reading and hearing his Word!

— "Sometimes a light surprises
"The Christian, while he sings;
"It is the Lord that rises
"With healing in his wings."

But how will he arise in the irradiations of heaven —in the morning of immortality; making a day, to be sullied with no cloud, and followed with no evening shade! Then their sun shall no more go down—

"God shall rise, and, shining o'er you,
"Turn to day the gloomy night;
"He, your God, shall be your glory,
"And your everlasting light."

MAY 8.—"*I will look for him.*" Is. viii. 17.

THIS is peculiar language. It is the language of none in *heaven*. There all have found him, and are for ever with the Lord. It is the language of

none in *hell*. There they are only concerned to escape from his hand, and to elude his eye. It is not the language of any in the WORLD. There they are sufficiently active and eager; but they rise early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow, to glain some temporal advantage, honour, or pleasure —but none saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" It is not the language of all in the CHURCH. There are some happy souls who know the joyful sound, and walk in the light of God's countenance: in his Name they rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness they are exalted. But there are others, whose desire is to his Name, and to the remembrance of him; whose wish is, "O that I was as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my soul, and the Almighty was yet with me." These, these are the persons who are saying—and they cannot do better than say—"I will look for him."

It is here supposed that God may hide himself from his people. Indeed it is expressly asserted in the former part of the verse, "I will wait upon the Lord who hideth himself from the house of Israel." Sometimes he does this as to providential dispensations, suffering them to fall into trouble, and for awhile leaving them, as if he had no regard for them, and had forgotten to be gracious. But we now refer to spiritual manifestations. Sometimes they are so in the dark, that they are unable to perceive their condition, or enjoy the comforts of the Holy Ghost. God loves them always, and they cannot serve him in vain; but they cannot always see this, as they once did. The sun is as really in his course, in a dark day, as in a bright one, but his face is hid by fogs and clouds: and, says David to his God, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." For when we are in the dark with regard to *him*, other things come forth and dismay us—and it is true, morally, as well as physi-

cally, "Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth."

But the subjects of Divine grace cannot rest satisfied without God. We see this in Job: "O that I knew where I might find him—Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." This anxiety and restlessness to find him, results from three things. LOVE—that longs to be near the object of attachment, and cannot endure separation. CONVICTION—which tells him of God's infinite importance to his case, and of his own entire dependence upon him. I am sick, says he, and he is my only physician: I am a traveller, and he is my only guide. I have nothing; he possesses all things. EXPERIENCE—he has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and the relish of the enjoyment adds to the sense of want; for that which indulges the appetite, provokes it also. Hence, though the believer does not desire more *than* God, he desires more *of* him.

Well—this restlessness is a token for good. Henry says, "A Christian is always on the perch, or on the wing; he is always reposing in God, or in flight after him; and the latter is as good an evidence of religion as the former—for delight is not only a part of complacency and affection, but also fear, complaint, desire—fear of losing the object—complaint of our enjoying so little of it—desire of attaining and feeling more."

Therefore be of good comfort, and if you ask, where you are to look for him—Look for him in Christ, where he is reconciling the world to himself. In him he is well pleased. Look after him, in the promises: there you will find him, pledged in every readiness of power and compassion. Look after him in his ordinances: where two or three

are gathered together, there is He in the midst of them. And not only look for him in the temple, but in the closet: pray to thy Father who *is* in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Look after him in thy former experiences. Call to remembrance thy song in the night.

"Did ever trouble yet befal,
"And he refuse to hear thy call?"

Can all your former views and feelings be a delusion?

"Could you joy his saints to meet?
"Choose the ways you once abhorr'd?"

Would he have shown you such things as these, and also have accepted an offering at your hands, if he had been minded to kill you?

And when you have found him whom you are looking after, fall at his feet, and ingenuously confess your unworthiness in causing him to withdraw from you. Complain not of him; justify him: but condemn yourselves. And instead of thinking he has dealt hardly with you, wonder that he has not cast you off for ever, and be thankful that he has been found of you again. Again you have morning; again you have spring: but the rising and shining of the sun has made it. "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." Cleave to him with purpose of heart. Resolve rather to die, than again grieve his Holy Spirit.

"Till thou hast brought me to thy home,
"Where doubts and fears can never come;
"Thy countenance let me often see,
"And often thou shalt hear from me."

MAY 9.—"*So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.*" Dan. vi. 23.

His case at first seemed very hard to flesh and blood; but we here see the end of the Lord. All was so overruled, that Daniel had no reason to repent of his conduct, or lament the result of it. It is true, the God he served continually, did not preserve him from the den of lions; but he delivered him out of it. He could have made a way for his escape; but the prevention of the trial would not have been half so impressive and useful as the issue. What a night did he pass there! What hours were they of prayer and praise! of peace and joy! What reflections did he make upon the power and goodness of his God—while the hungry lions (and they had been prepared to devour) looked on, and snuffed his flesh, but felt an invisible Restrainer, who said, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm. How would he resolve to confide in him, and confess him, and serve him, in future! How would the multitude be impressed! Those who doubted would be convinced. The timid would be emboldened. Many proselytes would be made to the religion of Daniel—while the king said, "I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

How much, therefore, did his stedfastness conduce to the glory of God, and the advancement of his cause! Christians never honour God more than in the fires. When they suffer like themselves; when they are witnesses for God; when

they shew that his service is too dear to be forsaken; and that they are willing to follow him to prison, or to death: and that the religion they more than *profess*, enables them to glory in tribulation also—then, men see that there is a reality in it—a vital—a blessed reality: and that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

But the result equally terminated in Daniel's own honour and welfare. When taken up, how would every eye be drawn towards him! How breathless would be their gaze! How would every tongue extol him! With what shoutings would they follow him home!—When they met him, how ready would every man be to say, There is the man who would rather enter a den of hungry lions, than violate his conscience, or sin against his God! What influence would be attached to his character! what weight to his advice and counsel!—A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. His reputation is perfected. His attainder is revoked. He is restored—he is promoted by his Sovereign to a higher station.

— And who would not have done what Darius did! He who had been faithful to his God, was more likely to be faithful to his king. This is, indeed, one of the ways in which godliness *naturally* conduces to a man's present advantage. It gains him confidence; and this is the lever of elevation. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, while as yet this prince was a Heathen, wished to know the *character* of those about him. He, therefore, called together before him all the chiefs in his suite, and ordered them to offer sacrifices to his gods, on pain of being deprived of all their honours and functions. The trial was severe. Many sunk under it. They could not give up every thing that was dear and valuable. But some were inflexible. They had bought the truth, and they would not sell it for any price. Whatever they suffered,

they were resolved to have a conscience void of offence. What happened? Those who basely complied, he drove from his presence; while those who nobly refused, he entrusted with the care of his person, and placed them in the most important offices —saying, On these men I can depend—I prize them more than all my treasures. And we know who hath said, Them that honour me I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

MAY 10.—"*And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.*" Ex. xiii. 18, 19.

HERE are two circumstances not to be overlooked, because God has deemed them worthy of record.

The first is not easily understood from the present version. It is said, They went up out of Egypt *harnessed.* The word harness, when the Bible was translated, signified not the furniture of a horse, but of a soldier—or armour; and this is the first sense the term bears in Johnson's dictionary: and to check the presumption of a warrior, it was once said, "Let not him that putteth on the *harness* boast himself like him that putteth it off." The translators therefore meant to say, that they went out *armed.* Yet this is not at all probable. Such a jealous tyrant as Pharoah would, by his spies, have prevented the Israelites from manufacturing, or purchasing, or hoarding up, weapons. We find in after-times, when the Philistines held the Jews in subjection, they would not allow a smith to live

in the country, and only permitted them to sharpen their agricultural implements at particular places. "But they had arms in the Wilderness, when they fought Amalek and others." Yes, they had carried away a few weapons concealed, and made others out of the materials they had with them; and above all, they furnished themselves from the spoils of Pharaoh's army thrown on shore—But they were now only going out from Egypt. The margin is, they marched "*five* in a rank"—But this would have extended the train more than fifty miles in length. Others, therefore, have rendered it, "in five squadrons." But all the meaning seems to be—that they moved out—not armed—but in soldier-like order; as regularly organized and slowly as disciplined troops—and not like a rude rabble, or a huddled jostling multitude. It shows that they did not go out by "haste or by flight." And this is very remarkable, considering their numbers, and the quality of the people, and how natural it was for those behind to dread lest their task-masters should overtake them, and therefore to press forward, to get before. But there was nothing of this: they moved with such steadiness and stillness, that "against none of them did a dog move his tongue." We are also informed that "there was not found one feeble among them." Indeed, they had enough to do to take care of themselves and their goods, without being incumbered with invalids. But did ever such an immense multitude leave a place before without one individual unable to follow? It was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

The other circumstance in this march regards "the bones of Joseph, which Moses took with them." This rendered it a kind of funeral procession, and such as no other history relates. Much people of Nain followed the bier of the widow's son; but Joseph's corpse was accompanied with every

man, woman, and child, of a whole nation. There is generally some time between death and interment, though in warm climates this is very short: here was an interval of near two hundred years. Other bodies may have been carried as far, but were never so long in their conveyance to the grave—for here forty years were taken up in bearing Joseph to his burial.

We read at the death of Joseph, that "they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt;" and when we consider that he was the prime minister and the saviour of the country, and the most popular man in the realm, we may be assured that this was done in a manner the most perfect and sumptuous. The descendants of his own family would be likely to have the care of this precious deposit; and they would feel a peculiar veneration for it—But it was dear to all; and useful to all. It was a memento of the vanity of all human greatness. Joseph had risen in life to an unexampled degree of eminence. But what, where, now is the Governor and idol of Egypt? Mummied within those few inches of board! It was also a moral, as well as a mortal memento. Joseph was a very pious character: he had been highly exemplary in every relation and condition of life; and much of God, of Providence, and of grace, was to be read in his history—What an advantage to be always reminded of such a man, in having his remains always in the midst of them! But the body would be, above all, valuable, as a pledge of their future destination. It was a present palpable sign of God's Covenant with their fathers, on their behalf.

For observe how they came in possession of this treasure.

It was according to the dying wish and prophecy of Joseph: "For he had straitly charged the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away

hence with you." His charge did not arise from a superstitious principle, as if it were better or safer to moulder in one place than another. Nor even from a principle of natural and relative affection—This feeling, indeed, is often strong, and the wish of persons to lie with their kindred seems to grow with the decline of life. How affectionately does Jacob express this sentiment, when dying! "I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham, and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac, and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." This, however, was more than the language of Nature in the father—and so it was in the son. The Apostle tells us, "By *faith* Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." If he did it by faith, his faith must have had a divine warrant; and it had. It was the promise of a God that cannot lie, that he would give Canaan for a possession to the seed of Abraham.

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." And this was, at the very time, ratified by a solemn covenant. Joseph knew of this engagement, and believed it; and though the time was remote, and the difficulties in the accomplishment many, like a true son of Abraham, he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. This raised him above the treasures

of Egypt; this kept them from naturalizing there midst all his prosperity—*there* he was only a stranger and a sojourner—another nation was his people—another land was his home: and therefore, instead of being entombed in an Egyptian pyramid, he ordered his body to be taken immediately to Goshen, and kept by them till they should go as a body to possess their inheritance, and then bury him with his fathers.

And behold the fulfilment! Enslaved as they were, they are delivered. Their enemies perish. They live by miracle for forty years in the Wilderness. The Jordan is crossed. Canaan is taken—and, says the Conqueror to the people he had led to victory, "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem." What more? "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." Here we leave his hallowed remains till the resurrection of the just; inscribing over his sepulchre—
A MEMORIAL OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

"O for a strong and lively faith
"To credit what th' Almighty saith:
"T' embrace the message of his *Son*,
"And call the joys of heav'n our own."

MAY 11.—"*The lame man which was healed held Peter and John.*" Acts iii. 13.

How perfectly natural and picturesque are the narratives of the Bible; serving at once to vouch for their truth, and to leave their representations fixed in the memory.

The circumstance here mentioned is too simple, striking, and touching, to be overlooked. The poor man had been lame from his mother's womb, and was placed daily at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, to ask alms of the worshippers. Silver and gold, Peter and John had none: but they gave him something far better. In the name of the Lord Jesus, said they, rise up, and walk. And immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. And he, leaping up—stood—and walked—and entered with them into the temple—walking—and leaping—and praising God. The people also, seeing what was done, hastened to Solomon's Porch, greatly wondering—But the man that was healed *held Peter and John.*

Was this the effect of apprehension? Did he imagine their influence was confined to their bodily presence? and that if he let them go, his lameness would return?

Or did it result from a wish to point them out to the multitude? "Are you looking after the wonderful men who have made me whole"—eager and proud to proclaim them; "Here," says he, "Here they are—These are they."

Was it not still more the expression of his attachment? "O my deliverers and benefactors, let me attend upon you; and enjoy the happiness to serve you. Entreat me not to leave you, nor to return from following after you. Let me live, let me die with you."

— So it is in our spiritual cures. It is natural to feel a regard for those who have been the means of our

recovery; and to keep hold of them—But let us remember, we may hold them too closely. And we do so, if we suffer them to draw us away from the God of all grace. For whoever are the instruments of doing us good, He is the agent; and he will have us to remember, that the excellency of the power is of Him, and not of them. Hence the reproof—"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as God gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." They are something in the order of means, and a proper respect is due to them in *this* character: but they are nothing as to efficiency and success—*this* is entirely from God; and his glory will he not give to another. To idolize a minister, is the way to have him removed from us, or rendered unprofitable to us—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." We can never honour God so much as by dependence upon him. And them that honour him he will honour; and they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

MAY 12.—"*And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But*

he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." **Luke ix. 52—56.**

WHY did our Saviour send a message, to "make ready for him?" It could not be from a principle of self-indulgence—he had blamed Martha for her too much serving, when she entertained him. Neither was it for the purpose of show and ostentation. But it was from a motive of civility—not wishing to put them to trouble and confusion by his sudden arrival, especially as he travelled not alone, but with his disciples, and probably others; and also, as he purposed paying for the accommodations he ordered—to *try* their dispositions. Accordingly they were immediately displayed.

But why "would they not receive him?" There had always been an implacable aversion between them and the Jews. It appeared on all occasions, and even hindered, as we find in the answer of the woman at the well, the common offices of civil life. But to this ordinary dislike, something peculiar was here added. They knew that our Lord was a public teacher, and had heard of his miracles—but his services had been with their enemies. They also had *their* temple—and their festivals, which were held at the same time with those of the Jews: and one of these was at hand. But they saw he was bound, not to mount Gerizim, but to mount Zion—Therefore "they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to *Jerusalem*."

Not far from this very place Elijah had punished Azariah's captains and companies, sent to take him. John and James therefore ask, "Lord, wilt thou that *we* command fire to come down from heaven to consume them, even as *Elias* did?" The very infirmities of good men are peculiar; they are the spots of God's children. Here was some-

thing excusable; yea, even commendable. Such was their acquaintance with Scripture—their applying to our Lord for his permission and approbation—their faith and confidence in his power, that if *He* willed the thing, it must take place—and their attachment to him: for they could not bear to see one so dear to them insulted, in being refused the common rights of strangers. But evil blended with the good. Their zeal was not according to knowledge. The punishment was also extreme: for though the people had shewn their rudeness and prejudices, they had not offered him violence; yet they must be *destroyed* and sent down quick into hell in their sins—and *all* of them, though some of them might have been far less blameable than others. The cases, too, were not parallel. Elias had a call—the very impulse in him was supernatural, and was justified by the event: for fire from heaven would not have obeyed private passion. *He* acted from a regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of Israel —But these men had no call, and were urged on by their own feelings—

He therefore rebukes them—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." They little suspected how much their own tempers had to do in the proposal. When the Gadarenes besought him to depart out of their coasts; and when the Nazarenes took him to the brow of the hill to cast him down; these disciples did not call for such vengeance then—No: *they* were Jews—but these offenders are *Samaritans.* How insensibly does something of our selfish and carnal feelings creep in and assume a religious pretension! None of our passions justify themselves so much as anger; we think we do well to be angry—but the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. We may offer strange fire on God's own altar; but it is not thereby sanctified. The Author of Peace and Lover of Concord requires us to "show out of a good conversation our works with meekness

of wisdom. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

How much does it become us to study our own spirits, and watch over the springs of our actions! A Jehu may say, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord," when he was only removing God's enemies to clear his own way to the throne. What do some mean by dealing faithfully (as they call it) with others, but indulging their dislike and insolence? Some professors of religion never reprove their servants and children, but in fretfulness and ill humour; and then their temper is discharged in a kind of spiritual scolding. Who can understand his errors? "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Our Lord knew James and John better than they knew themselves; and, in further reproof, he refers to himself as their example: "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He came indeed to seek and to save the soul principally; but he did not overlook the body. He healed the diseased. He fed the hungry. And has taught us to be merciful to the temporal wants of our fellow-creatures. And even in carrying on his own peculiar cause, and endeavouring to promote the religion of the Bible, he allows us not to employ force; or to impoverish, or imprison, or in any way persecute. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. My kingdom, said he, is not of this world: else would my servants fight —Indeed they would. Yea, they have fought— Men—women—children, have fought. They have fought with more than the courage of heroes. They have *prayed*; and *lived*; and *taught*; and *wept*; and *bled*; and *died!*

MAY 13.—"*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Rom. vii. 25.

THE experience of the Christian, while in this world, is of a mixed nature. It resembles the day spoken of by Zechariah; which was neither dark nor clear. Whatever advantages he attains at present, there is always enough to tell him that this is not his rest. But under all his complaints, he has reason to take courage, and be thankful. So it was with Paul. For these words are to be taken in connexion with his language in the preceding verse; where he groans, being burdened with the remains of indwelling sin: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

— Yes; even in the midst of such an experience as this, there is a four-fold ground of thankfulness: and the Christian may say—First, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that my corruption is my complaint. It was not so once—neither is it so with many now. *They* drink in iniquity as the ox drinketh in water. It is their element: but it is not mine. They roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue: but I have been made to know that it is an evil thing, and bitter. I loathe it, and abhor myself for it, repenting in dust and ashes. The heart of stone has been taken away, and I have a heart of flesh; a heart affected not only with the guilt, but the pollution, and the vileness of sin. I have nothing to boast of: every view I take of myself is humbling—but my desire is before him, and my groaning is not hid from him.

"Marks of grace I cannot show;
"All polluted is my best:
"Yet I weary am, I know—
"And the weary long for rest"—

And they are invited to obtain it.

Secondly, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that though I am in the conflict, I am not conquered. Though yet alive, the Enemy is dethroned. Though it rages, it does not reign. It threatens to resume its ascendancy, and has sometimes alarmed my fears—I have said, I shall one day perish; but having obtained help of God, I continue to this day: faint, yet pursuing—and feeling no disposition to turn back.

Thirdly, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that deliverance is sure.

> "What though my inbred lusts rebel;
> "'Tis but a struggling gasp for life:
> "The weapons of victorious grace
> "Shall slay my sins, and end the strife."

The victory in this case may be inferred from the reality of the conflict. It is as certain as the Word of God can render it. The result is left to no precariousness, but secured in the everlasting Covenant. He who made his soul a sacrifice for sin, shall see his seed, and be glorified in them. Their help is laid on One that is mighty. His blood cleanseth from all sin. His righteousness justifies the ungodly. His grace is sufficient for the most weak and exposed—They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. And they may anticipate this, and, rejoicing in a hope that maketh not ashamed, say, I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day. Yea,

Finally, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, that the deliverance is near. Were it remote, I ought to wait for it with patience. Others wait. The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience until he receive the early and the latter rain. But it will not tarry. If life be short, the conflict cannot be

ong. Soon the warfare must be accomplished; and he enemies I have seen to-day, I shall see no more or ever. My salvation is nearer than when I believed —The night is far spent. The day is at hand—

"Though painful at present,
"'Twill cease before long;
"And then, O how pleasant
"The Conqueror's song!"

MAY 14.—"*I will cause you to pass under the rod.*" Ezek. xx. 37.

THREE things in the Scripture go by this name. A father's scourge; a king's sceptre; and a shepherd's crook. All these will apply in the present nstance; and all of them are necessary to do some ustice to the subject.

— There is a paternal rod. Thus we read, He hat spareth the rod, hateth his son. I will visit heir transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities ith stripes. There can be no mistake here. The lea is correction; and the rod means the instruent with which the father chastises. God is a ather; and he has a rod. This rod is made up of ny kind of affliction—outward troubles—bodily pains —family bereavements. Even men, wicked men, eproaching and injuring us, and undeservedly too, s to *them*, may be God's scourge, to make us suffer or something else. Thus he said of the Assyrian: O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff n their hand is mine indignation. I will send him gainst an hypocritical nation, and against the people f my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the poil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down ke the mire of the streets." Our friends, our

children, our dearest comforts in life, God can make the means of chastising us, if needs be. Who comes not under this rod? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." They are not all exercised in the same way: but "what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" And who, painful as the exercise may be, cannot acknowledge, in the review, if not in the enduring,

"Yet I have found 'tis good for me
"To bear my Father's rod:
"Afflictions make me learn thy Law,
"And live upon my God"?

And as they are useful in our progress in the Divine life, so they have frequently been the means of first awakening the desire, "Where is God my Maker who giveth songs in the night?" The failure of the human arm, has made them feel after the Divine. The desolations of earth have said to purpose, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest." What sent the Prodigal home? He began to be in want. What brought Manasseh to repentance? In his afflictions he sought the Lord God of his father.

"Father, I bless thy gentle hand:
"How kind was thy chastising rod,
"That forc'd my conscience to a stand,
"And brought my wand'ring soul to God."

— There is a regal rod. So we call a sceptre. Of the Messiah, the King on his holy hill of Zion, it is said, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron:" but this refers to his adversaries. He has another kind of rod for his subjects: The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion. And what *was* sent out of Zion but the Gospel? The Gospel, therefore, is his rod; and this rod is his sceptre; the emblem of his authority, displaying his majesty, and maintaining his rule—Hence it is added, "Rule

ru in the midst of thine enemies;" meaning,
r his subjects, though surrounded with foes:
they are brought under his sway, and feel and
nowledge their subjection—as it follows, "Thy
ple shall be willing in the day of thy power."
ough once they said, Who is the Lord? and we
not have him to reign over us: they are all
ught under the rod of his strength. The Gospel
come to them not in word only, but in power.
as awakened their consciences; it has changed
ir dispositions; it has made them submit to the
iteousness which is of God, and to yield them-
es to his service, as those who are alive from the
d. They *were* the servants of sin; but they *now*
y from the heart the form of doctrine which was
vered them.

— There is a pastoral rod. Of this David speaks:
n addressing the Lord as his shepherd, he says,
ea, though I walk through the valley of the
dow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art
h me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."
s refers to the crook with which the shepherd
h walks as he follows, and uses as he manages,
sheep. It is the symbol and instrument of his
rge and office. The people of God are naturally
lost sheep going astray, wandering upon the
untains of barrenness and danger. But He seeks
m, and finds them out, and brings them all under
rod. And happy they who are under His care.
is their shepherd, and they shall not want. He
l make them to lie down in green pastures; he
l feed them beside the still waters. He will
tore their souls, and lead them in the paths of
hteousness, for his Name's sake. He will gather
lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom,
l gently lead those that are with young. And
privilege commenced in grace, will be continued
l completed in glory. "Therefore are they before
Throne of God, and serve him day and night

in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

MAY 15.—"*I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.*" Ezek. xx. 37.

WHAT is this *covenant?* Some always consider it a kind of stipulation between God and us; in which he proposes to do so much, if we will do so much: thus representing the Supreme Being as a bargainer, getting as good terms as he can, while man, the other high contracting party, agrees to them. But God is said to make a covenant with the earth; yea, and with the beasts of the field. This cannot intend a reciprocal negociation; but the engagement of God only: and which is called a covenant allusively, to signify its stability and certainty; the effect in the one instance being put for the cause in the other. For the same reason this name is given to that gracious constitution for the salvation of sinners through the Mediator, made known in the Scripture for the obedience of faith; and is the very same with what is also called "the mercy promised to the fathers;" and "the hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

The *bond* of this covenant is the obligation which it lays upon God who makes it, and upon those who are saved by it. We could not, without pro-

faneness, have talked of *binding* God; but he has been pleased, in his infinite condescension, to bind himself. His heart could have been trusted; but he knew our frame, and our weakness; and to remove all our fearful misgivings, arising from our meanness and guilt, he has brought himself under a covenant engagement. And if it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth it. And he has confirmed his engagement, by an oath—and because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself; and also by sacrifice—and the victim was no less than his only begotten Son, and whose blood, therefore, is called the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thus he is bound to be the God of his people; bound to save them; to pardon; to sanctify; to help them. Bound to make all things work together for their good. Bound to give them grace and glory, and to withhold no *good* thing from them.

It also binds them—Not to atone for their sin—this is already expiated; nor to produce a righteousness to justify them before God—this is already brought in, and on this their hope only relies—but they are bound to obey, and serve, and glorify Him who has done such great things for them. Surely evidence, consistency, gratitude, justice require it. They feel the obligation, and acknowledge it, and wish all to know that they are not their own, but bought with a price. They feel the obligation; and it is not irksome; for though they are bound, it is with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. It is the obligation of a mother to press to her bosom her sucking child; it is the obligation of a hungry man to eat his pleasant meat—My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me. It is a yoke; but it is like the yoke of marriage to the happy pair who daily bless the bonds. It is a burden; but it is like the burden of wings to the bird, which, instead of

confining him, gives him the freedom of the skies—My yoke, says the Saviour, is easy, and my burden is light.

Blessed are the people that are in such a case—Their humble confidence can authorise them, in every trouble, to say, "Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire"—and their affectionate zeal, in every temptation, will constrain them to sing,

"All that I have, and all I am,
"Shall be for ever thine:
"Whate'er my duty bids me give,
"My cheerful hands resign.

"Yet if I might make some reserve,
"And duty did not call,
"I love my God with zeal so great,
"That I should give him all."

MAY 16.—"*And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*" Luke ix. 51.

WHITHER he was to be received up, is not mentioned: but it is easily understood, especially if we compare the words with other passages. Accordingly the margin refers us to two places: in the first of which, Luke says, "Until the day in which he was taken up;" and in the second, Mark says, "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." The event, therefore, was his ascending to his Father and our Father; to his God and our God. There was the home where he originally dwelt. He speaks of a glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Thus

he was rich; but for our sakes he became poor, and made himself of no reputation. He resided on earth for three-and-thirty years in a kind of exile: a prince, higher than the kings of the earth, in disguise; and the world knew him not. But having accomplished the work that was given him to do, he entered into his glory.

— And if nothing is left to chance in our minutest affairs, surely there was nothing unarranged with regard to his leaving this world to go unto the Father. Accordingly we here read of the *time* for his being received up. And if they have chronicles above, and days, as we have—what a memorable day would that have been in which, after such an absence, and after such astonishing exploits, and completely vanquishing all the powers of darkness, the everlasting doors were opened, for the King of Glory to enter in!

— On this, therefore, the Saviour fixed his eye; and this emboldened him to *set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem.* For, what zeal, what courage did the determination require! He knew the perilous nature of the journey. He apprehended all that awaited him when he should arrive—That there he should be forsaken—and betrayed—and apprehended—and mocked—and scourged—and crucified. Yet his resolution does not fail him. Lo! I come, says he, to do thy will, O God!. I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! For he looked—*beyond*—and regarded the blessed result. And this was the glorification of his human nature; the acquirement of his mediatorial reward; the dispensation of the Holy Spirit; the government of the world; the salvation of the Church; the enjoyment of the praises of the redeemed for ever! This was the joy set before him in covenant engagement; and for this he endured the Cross, and despised the shame. For though his soul was to

be made a sacrifice for sin, yet he knew that he should rise from the dead, and see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Therefore, as the season drew near, he looked to the issue, and triumphed in the prospect. Now, says he, is the hour that the Son of man shall be—not abased, but—glorified. *Now* is the judgment of this world; *now* is the Prince of this world cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

— So, Christian, should it be with you. There is a time appointed when you also shall be removed from this vale of tears, and be for ever with the Lord. Think of it; and set your face boldly and firmly to go, wherever duty calls. The man who has an amputation to suffer, must not dwell on the operation—but must pass beyond, to the restoration of health, and the continuance of life. This, Christian, is the way to endure, and to be more than a conqueror. It is to reckon, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed—You may sow in tears, but you shall reap in joy. The road may be rough, but it will soon bring you home.

"Yet a season, and you know
"Happy entrance will be given;
"All your sorrows left below,
"And earth exchang'd for heaven."

MAY 17.—"*If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we*

will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Dan. iii. 17, 18.

CONDUCT so tried, and so triumphant in the trial, must have had some principle to produce it. He who acts without principle, is the slave of impulse, humour, accident, custom; and you can no more rely upon him, than upon a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. But when a man is governed by principle, he will be consistent in his practice: he may have infirmities, but a sameness pervades his character; he may err, but he is conscientious: and his excellencies will appear even in his mistakes and failings. Can we find a principle adequate to *this* heroism? The Apostle tells us it was faith. But faith must have something to lay hold of—and the faith of these young men seizes three things.

The first is, the *power* of God. Our God whom we serve is *able* to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. They knew nothing was too hard for the *Lord*. And we believe in the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. We, indeed, are not to look for miracles; but the power of God is the same as formerly: and there are cases in which the view of it can alone inspire relief. When difficulties multiply, and means fail, and creatures say, help is not in me—then we must lay hold of his strength, and remember that he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

The second is, his *disposition*. And he *will* deliver us out of thine hand, O king. This they deemed probable—perhaps they had a persuasion of it, derived from a Divine impression; or deduced from the character of God, and the records of his Word. They had read in the Scriptures, along with the experience of his people, the assurance, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and

I will deliver thee:" "When thou passest through the waters. I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Here is another argument of faith—His people eye his goodness, as well as his power; and know that he *will* appear for them, and save them—in his own way, and in his own time.

The third, is a future state.—"But if *not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What! would they refuse, even if death was the consequence? Yes. But this shews undeniably, that they did not consider death as annihilation. They would not have acted thus, had they believed that there was nothing beyond the grave. Had they perished in the furnace, their martyrdom *could* not have been their duty—it would have been the sacrifice of fools—their end would have been madness.

This is the very case argued by the Apostle, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable:" "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" God does not require us to sacrifice our being and happiness for ever, to his pleasure —It is *not* his pleasure; it *cannot* be his pleasure. By the law of our nature, and the authority of his Word, we are even *commanded* to seek our welfare, and to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness—and therefore to be willing to give these up, would be disobedience, and contempt. But the language was wise and noble, when they knew, that though they fell in the conflict, they should *yet* be more than conquerors;

and that, if they lost a dying, they would obtain an immortal life.

It is absurd to suppose the Jews of old had no knowledge of a future state. Search the Scriptures, says the Saviour, for in them ye think ye have eternal life. Abraham, and his fellow-heirs of the same promise, said such things as declared plainly that they sought a country, even a heavenly. David said, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and *afterward* receive me to glory. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego *acted* upon this belief; and *must* have acted upon it. They endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. And what was Nebuchadnezzar, compared with the Almighty? What was this furnace, compared with the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the *second* death? What could they gain by complying, compared with what they would for ever lose? And what could they lose by refusing, compared with what they would for ever gain—We reckon, said they, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

— And *our* faith must regard the future; or we shall be often perplexed and vanquished. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. This believed, and realized, explains all; harmonizes all; indemnifies all; glorifies all. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

MAY 18.—"*Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*"
Matt. xvii. 4.

—"NOT knowing," we are assured, by the Holy Ghost; "not knowing what he said." For had the motion been complied with, how could our Saviour have suffered and died? And if Peter had continued there, how could he have attended to his wife and children? Besides, he was mistaken, as to the nature and design of the Dispensation; which was only for a confirmation of their faith, by making them witnessess of his glory, and to afford them a glimpse or taste of the heavenly blessedness—The full fruition is for another world. If ever we think of building tabernacles here, we shall soon hear a voice, saying, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest."

But though he did not know what he said, he knew *why* he said it. Two things caused his bliss. First, the communion of saints. And here were not only John and James, but Moses and Elias; and these were not shining statues—but they spake—and spake of the Saviour's decease. What a subject! What speakers! How delightful must such intercourse have been!—But the second, was the presence of Jesus. And surely it cannot be a question, why it is good to be, where He is. With him, we are safe; and no where else. He is the source of all light and knowledge. He is the fountain of honour and excellency. He is the Consolation of Israel. He is all and in all.

But where *is* he with his people?—we do not mean as to his essential presence—this is universal; but as to his special and gracious.—He is with them in the closet. There he manifests himself to them, as he does not in the world. There they enjoy

an intimacy, a freedom, an unrestrained intercourse with him, such as other company will not allow. Could these beams and rafters—said a good man, pointing to an unceiled roof, speak; they would testify what hours of enjoyment I have had here, in communion with Him. Of the closet, therefore, they can say, It is good for us to be *here*.

— He is with them in his Temple. Where would you look for a man, but in his own house? And the Sanctuary is the place where the Lord's honour dwelleth. In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And have they not found the promise true? Have they not seen his power and glory in the Sanctuary? Of his House, therefore, they can say, It is good for us to be *here*.

— He is with them at his Table. His Cross is every thing to a Christian; and here before our eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us. What a sublime duty, what an exalted privilege, is the Commemoration of his Death! His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed! Who has not peculiarly found him in this exercise the Tree of Life? Who has not said, I sat down under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste? It is good for us to be *here*.

— He is with them in the furnace. There the Three Hebrew Children found him. The flames only consumed their bands, and set them free; and they were seen walking in the midst of the fire—with the Son of God! I will be with thee, says He, in trouble. And if this be fulfilled—and it must be fulfilled—they will have reason to say, however deep the distress—Lord, it is good for us to be *here*.

— He is with them in the vale of death. How much will they need him then! Then all other friends and helpers leave them. Then heart and flesh will fail them—What shall we do, they have often said; what shall we do without him then? But they

will not be without him. He knows their frame; and his grace is sufficient for them: and his strength shall be perfect in their weakness—Yea, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he is with them; his rod and his staff they comfort them: and then they have cause to say, Lord, it is good for us to be *here*.

— How much more will they be justified in saying this in heaven! There he is with them immediately. There they will see him as he is. There, before the presence of his glory, they will possess fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

But none will be translated thither in person, whose hearts are not sent off first. None will have their residence in heaven hereafter, who have not their conversation in heaven here. None will be with the Lord for ever, but those that find it their happiness for the Lord to be with them now.

MAY 19.—"*He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*" John xiii. 4, 5.

THAT he designed this to be exemplary, is obvious, from his own declaration after the action had been performed. "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are *ye if* ye do them."

Now it is not necessary that we should resemble him in the very circumstances of the action; but only in the spirit of it. In Popish countries, the ceremony of washing the feet of another, is often performed by persons not *very* lowly in heart —sometimes by a cardinal—yea, and the Pope himself. But the design is to enforce the *humility of brotherly love;* and to teach us that no service is to be deemed too mean for Christians to perform, when Providence brings it in their way, and the condition of a fellow-creature requires it. We may profess to do this in the abstract, but refuse to afford the actual assistance called for, in particular instances, because the office is too mortifying to the pride of our feelings or manners. But this is not to love without dissimulation. This is to love in word, and in tongue; but not in deed, and in truth. Many have lost all credit here, by their unfeeling, distant, and disdainful conduct towards their inferiors, when they had the finest opportunities to evince their condescension, if they had any.

It would be well, if all who name the Name of Christ would attend to the admonition of his Apostle —"In honour, preferring one another—Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." Job was the greatest man in the East; yet he could say, "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" And with regard to those sufferers generally overlooked by greatness, yea, and by mediocrity too; and those instances of humbler kindness, which splendid beneficence never thinks of; he could make this affecting appeal: "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone,

and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone."

A great man seldom wants more help than he can purchase or procure. Though he has wasted his substance, and reduced himself so as to deserve starvation; his utmost extremity is superfluous subsistence, compared with the suffering of a worthy character, who is neglected because originally indigent. But the industrious poor should be the objects of our attention, whose distress is brought upon them, not by vice, extravagance, and speculation, but by the providence of God; and whose condition sinks them below observation; so that, in the midst of their trouble, none careth for them.

Services small in their nature, are greatly esteemed by those who are commonly neglected. And in those offices you perform for them, you serve the Lord Christ. They cannot recompense you; but He will graciously say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Let me, then, hear his blessed invitation—Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Let the same mind be in me, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient *unto death,* even the death of the cross.

MAY 20.—"*Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.*" 2 Cor. ix. 15.

THIS gratitude, no doubt, must be due, infinitely due. But, to excite and increase our thankfulness, it is desirable to know, not only that the Son of God has been given *for* us, but *to* us; and that he is now actually our *own*. There are some who are satisfied here. They can say, This *is my* beloved, and this *is my* friend: the strength of *my* heart, and *my* portion for ever. But this is not the case with all. Some are asking, with all the anxiousness the importance of the subject requires, Is this unspeakable gift, for which eternity will be too short to praise God, *mine?* In answer to which, allow me to ask,

Do you approve of the design for which he was given? He came into the world to save sinners, in a way equally *gracious* and *holy*. Do you acquiesce in a purpose which involves the destruction of *self* and *sin?*

Have you received him? In the Word and means of grace he is presented to us. We read of some who have received Christ Jesus the Lord; and as many as received him were privileged to become the sons of God. Has this act been yours? When Laban saw Abraham's servant laden with presents, he said, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord"—Did you ever give Christ such an invitation? "Zacchæus made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully"—Did you ever give him such a welcome? And are you willing to receive him wholly? For is Christ divided? Can you receive him as your prophet, and not as your king? as your priest, and not as your example? Can you enjoy him in his sacrifice, and refuse him in his service? Can you entertain him in spiritual privileges, and cast him out in spiritual duties.

— Have you given yourselves to him? I do not

say, your substance only, or your time only—You may subscribe to religious institutions, and attend the means of grace—and keep back the main thing. But have you given him yourselves? The Corinthians gave their ownselves unto the Lord—Can you remember such a surrender? An evening, perhaps—when, like Isaac, in the field you said, "Lord, I am thine, save me." The close of a Sabbath, perhaps—when, in your closet, you read, and wept, and kneeled—and then rose, and wept, and kneeled again, and said—"O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me—henceforth by thee only will I make mention of thy Name."

— Do you supremely prize him? To them that believe, he is precious. Paul longed to depart, to be with—James? Isaiah? Moses? No—but to be with Jesus. You have some who are dear to you on earth—you have more in heaven. Perhaps you have a child there; lovely here, but a cherub there: perhaps you have a mother there, whose knees were the altar on which you laid your little hands to pray: perhaps you have there the dear minister who turned your feet into the path of peace—But, thinking of *Him*, can you say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire beside thee?"—Answer these inquiries, and claim this unspeakable gift as your own for ever.

— But here is another question: What use should the possessor make of this Gift? If you are Christians, though you were once darkness, you are now light in the Lord, and must walk as children of light. And much of your wisdom must appear in knowing what a prize you have in yonr hand.—Make use of him then, in all your duties. Meditation is a duty—Let him enrich, and enliven, and sweeten it. Prayer is a duty—do it always in his Name.—Make use of him in all your wants. You want cleansing—use him as the fountain open

for sin and uncleanness. You want safety—flee to him as your refuge. You want food—and his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed—feed on it.—Make use of him in all your afflictions. Are you bereaved? are you poor? Rely upon him, in whom you possess all things. You know that your Redeemer liveth.

— We have one question more—What can we think of those who disregard this unspeakable gift? What can we think of their ingenuousness—in contemning such infinite goodness and mercy? Of their danger?—How can they escape if they neglect so great salvation? Of their misery?—What can a wretch do without him in death, and at the judgment-day? It is awful to think that the Saviour may become the destroyer. The greatest blessing may prove the greatest curse.

MAY 21.—"*That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*" Phil. ii. 16.

THIS is mentioned as an argument, to enforce the duties he had just recommended: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." And surely we are to know them that labour among us; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake; and to co-operate with them; and to be zealously concerned to promote their usefulness and comfort. There is a peculiar relation between the minister and the people of his charge—and, as a

well-conditioned flock is the credit of the shepherd; and a well-ordered family, the commendation of the master; and the moral and prosperous state of his subjects, the praise of the ruler: so a wise, holy, consistent, amiable, lively, useful church is the honour and happiness of the preacher—He lives, if they stand fast in the Lord: for they are his glory and joy.

But why, for this satisfaction, does the Apostle refer to so *late* a period as the day of Christ? Had he no present rejoicing, from their excellencies and exertions? He had. But he knew that he must *now* rejoice with trembling. He had known many who did run well, but were hindered; who began in the Spirit, but ended in the flesh. He had seen many moral blossoms perishing without fruit; and experience taught him to distinguish between the hope of the spring and the richness of autumn. Persons for a season may rejoice in a minister's light, but in time of temptation fall away. They may hang on his lips, and then break his heart. He only that endureth to the end shall be saved: and then are we made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end—and "the day will declare it."

— And till then the true character and condition of those among whom he has laboured, will not be completely ascertained and developed.

— Till then, also, his hearers will not be placed beyond the reach of moral harm; or be incapable of injuring the cause they profess.

— Till then, also, his aim will not be fully accomplished, which is, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," and "filled with all the fulness of God."

— Then, also, many will acknowledge their obligations to his instrumentality, for their conversion or edification, which he knew nothing of here—and it will be safer and better for him not

to know the extent and degree of his usefulness, till he is secure from the possibility of vanity and pride—Then is the period for rejoicing, when there can be no mistake, no excess, no danger, in the joy.

— Oh! may he that watches for my soul, as one that must give an account, do it with joy, and not with grief!—

What a proof is here that there will be a knowledge of each other in heaven! How else could the Apostle say of converts, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory, and our joy."

MAY 22.—"— *Justified by the faith of Christ.*" Gal. ii. 16.

LET me remark here the blessing, and the way in which it is obtained.

What is justification? It is not the making us righteous in person, but in state. The Papists confound it with sanctification; and some Protestants do the same. But justification stands opposed to *condemnation.* It is the absolving a man from a charge; the acquitting him when accused; and pronouncing him righteous. Only as we are really guilty—*we* cannot be justified by disproving the offence, but by the non-imputation of it, and treating us as innocent. The manner is described by the Apostle: We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation for sin. The blessing is full and complete: for we "are justified from all things." It is permanent

and irreversible: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." It is also a present benefit. The perception of it may be wanting; but the state is real—they *have* passed from death unto life—they *are* accepted in the Beloved. And blessed, says David, is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed in his duties. Blessed in his comforts. Blessed in his trials. For him affliction has no curse. Death, no sting. Eternity, no terror.

This inestimable blessing is obtained by the faith of Christ. We are often curious, and ask for reasons, when we should be satisfied with facts. It is not necessary to be able to explain precisely how faith justifies the soul. It should be enough for us to know that it is a truth clearly revealed.

And since, O my soul, none are justified that do not believe; and all that believe are justified; let me apply my heart unto wisdom: and, instead of losing myself in subtle enquiries and angry disputes, let me do two things—Let me observe, first, the importance of this faith. It is, in a sober sense, as important as Christ: and what is ascribed to him meritoriously, is ascribed to faith instrumentally. He is the well; but by faith we draw water out of it. He is the refuge; but a refuge cannot screen us, unless it be entered. He is the Bread of Life; but food cannot nourish us, unless it be eaten—and all this is done by faith *only*.

Let me, secondly, ask, seriously and earnestly, have *I* this faith of Christ? Do I believe the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son? And am I repairing to him; and trusting in him alone for salvation? How does my faith sow? Does it "sow in tears?" How does it rejoice? Does it "rejoice in Christ Jesus?" and has it "no confidence in the flesh?" How does it work? Does it "work by love?" How

does it travel? How plead? Can I say, "I will in the strength of the Lord God; I will make n tion of His righteousness only?"

MAY 23.—"*Be not ye called Rabbi; for on your master, even Christ; and all ye are breth* Matt. xxii

RABBI signifies Master; not a domestic or master, having servants or subjects under h but a master of pupils; a leader, a teacher, hav disciples who admire and follow him. It was an ancient title: we scarcely read of it before coming of the Messiah. The Scribes and Phari were exceedingly fond of this name. "They lo says our Lord, "greetings in the markets, and be called of men, Rabbi, rabbi." "But," adds "be not ye called Rabbi."

The Apostles followed this admonition. " have no dominion," said they, "over your fa but are helpers of your joy." They did not lor over God's heritage, but fed them with knowle and understanding; and were ensamples to the fl They considered themselves as messengers, deriv all their authority from their employer; and alw referred their people from themselves to him. T delivered nothing but what they had receiv and called upon those they addressed, not to bel in them implicitly, but to search the Scriptur to prove all things; and hold fast that which good. They were offended if persons thought highly of them, or wished to be named after th "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye bapt in the name of Paul? Who then is Paul, and is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, e

as God gave to every man?" "So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

— It is now hardly possible to avoid religious names; but we lament that they were ever introduced. Why should parties be called Calvinists, Arminians, Lutherans, Baxterians, or by any other denomination? If the sentiments held by any of these men are not found in the Sacred Writings, they are not binding upon the conscience, whoever sanctions them: and if they are, why should it be intimated that they have any other origin? Let us be satisfied with the words the Holy Ghost useth, without attaching salvation or damnation to men's definitions of them. The documents are Divine and infallible; but who can pronounce the explications to be so?

If we call ourselves by the name of any human authority, let it be an inspired one. Let us call ourselves Paulites, after Paul; or Johnites, after John. But no. The worthy name by which we will be called, is *Christians—after Christ.* All we are brethren—but he *is* our Master; and the voice from the most excellent glory cries, "Hear ye *him.*" His authority was proved by miracles, wonders, and signs. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All he delivers to us is truth—truth unmixed with error—truth of the mightiest importance—truth that can make us free—truth that can make us holy—truth that can make us blessed—for evermore. And as to the mode of his tuition, none teaches like him; so tenderly; so effectually; so perseveringly.

— Will ye also go away? Lord, to whom should we go, but unto thee?

— Will ye also be his disciples? O my soul! refuse not the privilege. Henceforth may I hear—him, watching daily at his gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors. Lead me in thy truth, and guide me; for thou art the God of my salvation: on Thee do I wait all the day.

MAY 24.—*"I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan; that goodly mountain, and Lebanon."* Deut. iii. 25.

THIS desire seemed improper. For God had expressly said unto Moses and Aaron, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." We are poor creatures, and often insensibly transfer to God the effects of our own feeling and conduct. Did Moses then, through infirmity, think that God was changeable? No: but he thought whether the threatening was absolute; especially as it was not ratified by an oath, as the exclusion of the people was. For many of God's denunciations, as we see, for instance, in the sentence with regard to Nineveh, have a condition implied, though not expressed; *i.e.* they will be executed *unless* repentance intervenes—upon this principle it was possible for Moses to hope for a retraction of the interdict.

But the desire was a very natural one. It was natural for him to desire to enter Canaan, even as an object of curiosity, of which he had heard so much; but still more as an object of hope, which had been so long promised with every enhancement. This it was that had animated the people to leave Egypt. This had encouraged them in all their travels in the desert. This was the end, the recompense of all their toils and sufferings for forty years—and they had now nearly reached it! How painful to miss the prize—when the hand was in the very act of seizing it; and to have the cup dashed—even from the lip!

— Yet the desire was refused. And the Lord said unto him, Let it suffice thee—speak no more to me of this matter. For he sometimes refuses the desires of his servants, and the most eminent and endeared of them too. And he does this in

two ways. Sometimes he does it in *love*. He denies, because what is desired would prove dangerous and injurious. We should think badly of a father, who, if a son asked bread, would give him a stone; or if he asked a fish, would give a scorpion. But suppose, through ignorance, his son should ask for a scorpion instead of a fish; or suppose he should cry for a sharp instrument, or beg to climb up a steep ladder: *then* would he not hate his child, unless he rejected his wish? In how many cases must a wise and good parent distinguish between a child's wishes and his wants! He may wish for liberty; but he wants restraint: he may wish for holidays; but he wants schooling: he may wish for dainties; but he wants medicine—Here the love of the parent must appear in acting—not according to the wish, but the welfare of his child. And—

> "God's choice is safer than our own:
> "Of ages past enquire,
> "What the most formidable fate?
> "To have our own desire!"

How well would it have been for the Jews, had he more than once turned a deaf ear to their importunity! But they would have a king—and he "gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath." They would have flesh—and he gave them their hearts' desire, but sent leanness into their souls. On the other hand, who does not see, in looking back upon life, how well for him it was that such a scheme failed; that such a hope was crushed!—so much evil lurked under the specious appearance, or would have resulted from the indulgence. Who knows what is good for a man in this life? No one but God—the *good* God—

> "Good when He gives, supremely good,
> "Nor less when he denies:
> "E'en crosses from his sov'reign hand
> "Are blessings in disguise."

He also sometimes refuses in anger. Wrath compatible with love; but anger is not: an ay even flow from it. Though Christians can condemned, they may be chastened: and w of the house is, that if his children walk his commandments, he will visit their transgress ith a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. He ose who shall be saved eternally, may lie un e present rebukes of Providence; and be refu any things on which they have set their heart, station, business, connexions, and usefulness— em that honour him, he will honour. They n ink hard of this at first; but as they disco eir unworthiness and desert, they will bow to ispensation, and say, with David, "I know, O L hat thy judgments are right, and that thou in fa lness hast afflicted me." By such conduct, rovidence reads lessons to others. See, it s he evil of sin. See how severely God deals with ven in his own people. And if these things one in the green tree, what shall be done in ry! If judgment begins at the house of God, w hall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel ur Lord Jesus Christ! And if the righteous scar re saved, where shall the ungodly and the sin ppear!

— Yet his desire was partially indulged: "T halt not go over this Jordan; but get thee up i he top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westw nd northward, and southward, and eastward, ehold it with thine eyes." This was obvio ntended, not to tantalize him, but to be a *mitiga* f the severe sentence. The preservation of his g ight to so great an age, fitted him for the g nd probably it was also strengthened and enlar or this very purpose. The prospect shewed ow worthy the country was of all that God aid concerning it; and would give him high onourable views of the truth and goodness of

in his Covenant with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Along with this, too, there was exerted the influence of Divine grace, which soothed and satisfied him. For by this God can make us easy and contented under the refusal or loss of any comfort, however essential to our happiness it appeared before: so that we behave and quiet ourselves as a child that is weaned of his mother; our soul is even as a weaned child. While, also, his mind was raised to things above, and, in type and emblem, to a better country, into which he was immediately to enter—and then there would be no want of an earthly Canaan.

— Thus, in the midst of judgment, He remembers mercy. Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame; he rembereth that we are dust.

MAY 25.—"*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.*" Ephes. iv. 30.

THE expression is not to be taken properly and literally, as if the Holy Spirit of God was capable of vexation or sorrow. The Divine Nature is not subject to human passions. God's condescension is not to rob him of his glory. When the Scripture ascribes to him actions or affections that imply imperfection, it is in accommodation to our weakness of apprehension. We lisp with infants. And unable to view the shining sun with the naked eye, we survey it in a vessel of water, or through obscured glass.

We grieve a friend when we neglect him, or go contrary to his wishes and interests. And when he is grieved, he betrays it. His countenance is not

towards us as aforetime. Frowns succeed to smiles. He complains and reproves. He discontinues his visits and correspondence. All this will apply to the grieving of the Holy Spirit of God. And there are three reasons why we should not grieve him. —Nothing can be more unbecoming—ungrateful—unwise.

— Nothing can be more unbecoming, if we consider his greatness. The Holy Spirit is deserving in himself of all the regard we can express. If a nobleman was calling upon you, common civility would teach you not to hurt his mind. If the king honoured you with his presence, how anxious would you feel not to offend him; how studious would you be to please him in all your actions, and words, and looks. Here all comparison fails. No mortal is honoured like the Christian, with whom the King of kings and Lord of lords deigns even to dwell. And will he not be sensible of this? Will he not exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Will he not fall upon his knees, and pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer?"

— Nothing can be more ungrateful, if we consider his goodness. What obligation was he under to you? You were not worthy of the least of all his mercies; you deserved that his wrath should have come upon you as children of disobedience. Had he therefore left you to perish, you would have had no reason to complain. But who remembered you in your low estate? Who quickened you, when dead in trespasses and sins? Who unstopped your deaf ears, and opened your blind eyes? Who turned your feet into the paths of peace? Who enabled you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to life everlasting? Who gave you a disposition, a

taste, congenial with the work and enjoyment of heaven; and sealed you unto the day of redemption? But for his gracious agency, where, and what, would you now have been? And are you forgetful of all this? Are you grieving such a benefactor? Is this thy kindness to thy friend?

— Nothing can be more unwise, if we consider his importance to you. As you are deeply indebted to him for the past, so you are entirely dependent upon him for the future. You live in the Spirit, you walk in the Spirit. Grieve the Holy Spirit of God! What! would you grieve your *leader*, and be left to travel alone? Can you find your way without him? Can you learn without this teacher? Must he not guide you into all truth? What! would you grieve your *helper*, and be left to act alone in your work? Can you worship without the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, which are from him? Without him, can you order your speech, by reason of darkness? Can you know what to pray for as you ought, unless the Spirit helps your infirmities? What power have you in any duty, unless you are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man? You may spread your sails, but he must fill them. What! would you grieve your *preserver*, and be left to contend by yourself against your enemies? Are you a match for the power of darkness, and the devices of Satan? The first temptation that assaults you alone, may occasion your sinning and falling: and by this you may cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of—ministers to be discouraged—your fellow-Christians to be distressed—that which is lame to be turned out of the way—and your sin to be ever before you. What! would you grieve your *comforter*, and lose your hold of the promises, and be unable to discern your evidences of heaven, and feel your hope de-

cline, and your heart sink in the day of adversity; and be in bondage through fear of death—and groan, "O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head; and when by his light I walked through darkness, and while as yet the Almighty was with me!"

The comforts of the Holy Spirit can afford such strong consolation, as will revive us in the midst of trouble. According to the Saviour's assurance, when leaving this world, *his* being with us can more than make up for the loss of his own bodily presence. But, "When he hideth his face, who can behold him?" Vain then are friends, ministers, ordinances. "For these things," saith the Church, "I weep: mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me"—What infatuation to grieve him!

Yet if there were no danger of this, the admonition would not have been given. Let me not therefore be high-minded, but fear. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." I have always at hand, an active adversary, the Devil. I am passing through a world lying in wickedness. I carry within me an evil heart of unbelief; and every thing without, is rendered dangerous by the sin that dwelleth in me. They who far surpass me in every thing, have been overcome. Let me therefore watch and pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Nor let me be satisfied with negative religion. Let it not, O my soul, be enough that I grieve him not. Let me cherish all his motions. Let me walk so as to please God. Let me abound therein more and more.

MAY 26.—"*Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*" Ps. ii. 8.

"THE Heathen"—"the uttermost parts of the earth;" viewed in the representations of Scripture, and the reports of historians, travellers, and missionaries, seem a very unenviable acquisition. If it be true, that the whole world lieth in wickedness, it seems fitter to be for the inheritance "and the possession" of Satan, than the Son of God. But two things are to be taken into the account. Notwithstanding the present condition of the estate, it contains very *valuable* and *convertible* materials.

Every human being, however depraved and degraded, is a creature of God. He is the work of his hands, and is fearfully and wonderfully made. He has a soul of more value than the material world. The child of a savage is a richer production than the sun. The sun sees not his own light; feels not his own heat; and, with all his grandeur, is doomed to perish—But that child is the subject of reason; the heir of immortality. That child is capable of knowing, and serving, and resembling God, and of filling a sphere of everlasting action and enjoyment. That child will hear the heavens passing away with a great noise, and see the elements melting with fervent heat, and stand with all the dead, small and great, before God.

And we are also to consider what they may, and will become. Thus the Saviour viewed them, when they were surrendered to him. He pitied them; and he knew he was able to bless them—and he knew that they would not remain what they were: but that for him the wilderness and solitary place should be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. He knew it had been said, by Faithfulness and Truth, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the

hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off." The more desperate the condition of the patient, the more pleasure does his recovery afford the physician; and the more does it display his skill and ability. So here. All these captives the Redeemer ransoms; and each of them, as a justified, sanctified, glorified, being, will for ever reflect his honour. He found them at hell's dark door; but he raises them above the heavens. He found them in the likeness of the Devil; and he adorns them with the image of God. He found them the disgrace of the universe; and he makes them an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations.

What is so interesting and delightful to a man of taste, as alteration and improvement? With what pleasure does he view a piece of rude and barren soil, under his cultivation, looking forth, dressed in living green, and abounding with trees and flowers! What pleasure does a benevolent mind feel, when he views the child he has taken up, exchanging rags for decency, ignorance for knowledge, vicious and idle habits for virtue and industry—and contemplates his comfort, usefulness, and respectability, as the fruit of his kindness and labour! What satisfaction must the Saviour feel, to behold, as the effect of his Cross, and his Grace, the renewal of human nature; the deliverance of province after province from the power of Satan; and the kingdoms of this world coming under the influence of the Gospel! What an inheritance—what a possession will the Heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth be to the Messiah, when Paganism, and Mahommedanism, and the man of sin, shall perish! when the Jews shall come in, with the fulness of the Gentiles!

when, in every place, incense shall be offered unto him, and a pure offering! when the nations shall learn war no more! when the people shall be all holy, trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified!

We read of two vast gifts of God in the Scripture: the gift of his Son to the world; and the gift of the world to his Son. The first of these is the greatest; and we ought never to think of it, without exclaiming, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! But let us think of the other, also; and rejoice that our earth is to come under the dominion of the Messiah, and is given to him for this purpose. It is thus to him, as Canaan was to the Jews. Canaan was to them the Land of Promise; and, God having promised it, in vain was every attempt made to keep them from obtaining it. Egypt was plagued; Pharaoh and his army were destroyed; the Sea opened a passage for the heirs of promise; Jordan was driven back; and they were brought in triumph to the rest and the inheritance, which the Lord their God had given them. So will it be here. All opposition will be as vain as it is unreasonable. His enemies shall lick the dust. The word is gone out of God's mouth, and shall not return; that to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he shall come whose right it is, and I will give it him.

Let us think of his prospects. We have sympathised with him in his agony and bloody sweat; in his cross and passion. Let us exult at the thought, that he is crowned with glory and honour—and has the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And what an immensity of subjects will he derive from them! and what an infinity of services! and what an eternity of praises and delights! It was the joy set before him—and he shall see of the *travail of* his soul—and shall be satisfied.

We ought also to rejoice, from a principle of enevolence. His dominion involves the happiness f the human race. Nebuchadnezzar, and other onquerors, had nations given into their hand; ut they only enslaved, and impoverished, and cursed eir subjects. But,

"Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
"The pris'ner leaps to loose his chains:
"The weary find eternal rest,
"And all the sons of want are blest."

MAY 27.—"*The dumb spake.*" Matt. ix. 33.

HIS was a natural dumbness—the cure of which as to be one of the miracles attending the Messiah's dvent: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, nd the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then hall the lame man leap as an hart—and the tongue f the dumb sing."

But there is a moral dumbness, and the Saviour eals this when he makes us new creatures. Then ld things pass away, and all things become new—ot physically new, but spiritually new; each faculty ecoming new in quality, application, and use. Thus he man has a tongue before, but not a religious ne. He speaks before; but now his speech is with race. Now he speaks—of God—for God—and to od.

— He speaks *of* God. Of his perfections. Of is designs. Of his works, and ways, and Word. f his commands, and promises—a theme for angels.

He speaks *for* God. "On his behalf," as Elihu ays. In defending his truth. In justifying his eople. In recommending his service In pleading

his cause. Wisdom is necessary here; and we are to distinguish between places, and seasons, and characters. "A word fitly spoken, how good is it! It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Yet caution, though it should qualify our zeal, should not quench it. We should be courageous, as well as discreet—

> "And if some proper hour appear,
> "I'll not be overaw'd;
> "But let the scoffing sinner know,
> "That I can speak *for* God."

He speaks *to* God—And this is the better evidence of our sincerity. For many speak *of* God, and many *for* him; who never speak *to* him. While the world hears them, and the temple hears them; the closet does not. But the Christian's delight in God, and the duties and exigencies of his spiritual condition, will bring him often to His seat; and he will address Him much in a way of adoration, and praise, and confession, and intercession, and prayer.

If you are the subject of this grace, use it; and be concerned that the words of your mouth, as well as the meditation of your heart, may be acceptable in God's sight. Beware of any return of the old malady. There is an occasional, partial, comparative, dumbness; and it is brought on by sin. This stops our speech. It did so in the case of David, when he had fallen by his iniquity. It not only broke his bones, and deprived him of joy, but of confidence, and filled him with fear and silence—He could neither speak, as he had done, of God, or for God, or to God. It is a sad evil; and if it be your experience, do—it is the best thing now you can do—do as he did. Take the case, and lay it before God, and say—"Open thou my mouth, and my lips shall show forth thy praise."

MAY 28.

"Then will I teach the world thy ways;
"Sinners shall learn thy sov'reign grace;
"I'll lead them to my Saviour's blood,
"And they shall praise a pard'ning God.

"O may thy love inspire my tongue!
"Salvation shall be all my song!
"And all my powers shall join to bless
"The Lord, my Strength and Righteousness."

AY 28.—"*Grow in grace, and in the knowled*
ur Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. iii.

e consider these words as containing two
ions; may we not view the second as prescr
the way for the accomplishment of the firs
certain that there is a supreme excellency
knowledge here recommended; and that
would grow in grace, *must* grow in the kno
e of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
his knowledge is supposed to be progressiv
as gradual, even in its communication to t
l. Judaism was the dawn; Christianity, t
Prophets and righteous men desired to s
hings that we see, and did not see them; a
ar the things that we hear, and did not he
. There are degrees, also, in its attainme
experience—Four ways we may grow in tl
ledge.
irst. In its *extent*. Who has advanced near t
mities of this field? How little do the wis
of the treasures hid in it!

"The Cross, the Manger, and the Throne,
"Are big with glories yet unknown."

ls know much more than they once did. B
still desire to look into these things—How mu
should we!

Secondly. In its *certainty*. This is, and must be, the same in itself; but, as to us, the degree of it depends upon the perception of evidence: and the mind may be led along from possibility to probability, and from probability to full conviction. The firmness of belief may be strengthened by the confirmations of experience. The whole life of a Christian is a series of tests, by which he tries and proves the Word of God. He is therefore perpetually increasing in the full assurance of understanding, and has his heart established with grace.

Thirdly. In its *influence*. This implies the former, but is distinguishable from it. There cannot be practical knowledge without speculative. But who will not own that there may be speculative knowledge without practical? Who is ignorant of the difference there is between knowing things in theory, and in experience? between the apprehensions of the judgment, and the bias of the will, and the glow of the affections? Who feels, and fears, and loves, according to his belief? Alas! how often do we see and approve better things, and follow worse! How often are the clearest dictates of the understanding, and even convictions of the conscience, counteracted by our appetites and passions! We believe that we are dying creatures, and live as if we were to live here always! We own ourselves under the providence of Him who doth all things well; and we murmur and repine, as if his dealings were unjust or unkind! We doubt not the Saviour's power and love; and yet we cannot trust in him; and are strangers to consolation and peace!

Fourthly. In its *appropriation*. Job could say, "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth." David said, "God *is* the strength of *my* heart, and *my* portion for ever." The first Christians said, "We *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given *us* an understanding, that we may know Him that *is* true; and we *are* in him that is true." Who

does not want more of this delightful confide
to raise him above the world, to support hin
his trials, to embolden him in his profession, an
enable him to triumph over the fears of death?

O God, preserve me from delusion in a busi
of everlasting importance! Let me feel a thou
terrors, rather than perish with a lie in my r
hand. But if I am thine, save me from the ur
tainties I now feel. Give me the full assuranc
hope unto the end. Let me know, not only that t
are exceeding great and precious promises; but
I am an heir of promise—not only that in the l
Jesus all fulness dwells; but that I am blessed
all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him—
say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

MAY 29.—"*Ye are the children of the Lord*
God." Deut. xi

THE Jews were so by nation. All men are so
Creation and Providence. Christians are so
special grace, according to the language of Ins
tion—"Ye are all the children of God, by
in Christ Jesus." "As many as received
to them gave he power to become the sons of
even to them that believe on his Name; w
were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fl
nor of the will of man, but of God." Let us n
this relation a standard, by which to estimate
things.

First. The Divine goodness—Here we only
low the example of the Apostle John. *He,*
he, could not comprehend it; but he admire
and calls upon others to admire it with him: "Be

what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" What manner of love! How rich! how free! how expensive! What difficulties stood in the way! Yet he removed them. How, said He, shall I put thee among the children? But he did it. Yes; he not only spared and pardoned us; he not only admitted us into his family as servants, but as sons: and, for this purpose, he gave his own Son for us, and his Spirit to us. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ."

Secondly. The believer's dignity. Secular nobility derives all its lustre from flesh and blood; and if retraced, will be found to originate in the dust of the ground, from which Adam was taken. It has little value, unless in the fancies of men. But our relation to God confers real and durable honour; compared with which, the most magnificent titles in the world are mere shadows and smoke. How did the Jews boast of having Abraham to their father! "Is it a light thing," said David, a subject, "that I should be son-in-law to the king?" But I think of the majesty and dominion of God! The world is his, and the fulness thereof—I behold the productions of the earth, and the wonders of the skies, and say—

"My Father made them all!"

Thirdly. The happiness of the Christian. The relation has connected with it, the promise of pardon: and we daily need it; for in many things

we offend all. But I will spare him, says God, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. It gives us free access to God in prayer; and inspires us with confidence and hope of success: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Hence correction: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Hence education: he does not leave the child to himself; but trains him up in the way that he should go. Hence provision: He who feeds the ravens, will not suffer the righteous to famish. Their heavenly Father knoweth what things they have need of before they ask him; and will suffer them to want no good thing. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Many are born to an estate which they never obtain: but here the inheritance is reserved in heaven; and they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, on earth.

Fourthly. The duty of the saints. Are they all the children of the Lord their God? Then they ought to fear him. If I am a father, where is my fear? This will keep them from offending him. This will make them studious to please him. This will induce them to pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer."

As his children, they must walk worthy of God, who hath called them unto his kingdom and glory. We have read of a Polish Prince, who carried the picture of his father always in his bosom; and on any particular occasion, he would take it out, and view it, and say, Let me do nothing unbecoming so excellent a father.

Christians, do nothing unbecoming the rank of your family, and the grandeur of your descent. Be

harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke. Be followers of God, as dear children. Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

MAY 30.—"*Ask of me.*" Ps. ii. 8.

— THIS is the condition of a very important grant—Ask of me—and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Whatever appears humiliating in the condition to which the Saviour submitted, let it be remembered that he entered it voluntarily, and knowingly. He was aware that if the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself must also take part in the same; and that in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. He must therefore not only suffer, but obey; and though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience. He must therefore pray. Prayer is the act of an inferior nature; and the Word was made flesh. Though rich, he became poor; and made himself of no reputation.

Many objections are made to prayer. Some of them are specious, but they are all founded in ignorance. The best way to answer them is to take our stand on the Scripture, and make our appeal. Does not God derive his character and glory from his hearing prayer? Is not his Spirit the Spirit of grace and of supplication? Is not this his command? Is not this his promise? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." Does He dispense with this—even in the case of his Son? And can it be dispensable with regard to us? We know his determination: For all these things I

will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them—"Ask, and I shall give thee."

— But how was *he* to ask? First, when he was on earth, he prayed like one of us. He prayed alone, and in company with his disciples; he prayed in the Wilderness, and in the Garden, and on the Cross: "In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayars and supplication, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Secondly, he continued the presentation of his desire, when he entered heaven. We know not whether this was done vocally, but it was done really. Thirdly, he does it relatively. Thus prayer is made for him continually. And whenever individuals, ministers, and churches, pray for the success of his cause—*He* is asking.

— And his prayer, and our praying, are founded on the same consideration; viz. his sufferings and death. The counsel of peace was between them both. It was said, that when the Father should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; he should see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied. This was the joy set before him: and having fulfilled the awful condition on which it was suspended, he pleads for it—*He* therefore asks, in his *own* Name, and on his *own* behalf. And *we* ask on the *same* behalf, and in the *same* Name: according to his own direction, "Whatsoever ye shall ask, believing in my Name, ye shall receive."

And this should encourage and embolden us. There can be no more uncertainty attending the success of our asking, than of his; for herein we are identified with him. There is no unfaithfulness with God; and he hath said, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

— If our prayers are sincere, they must be influential; and we shall exert ourselves in the Redeemer's cause. Nor can we labour in vain. We are on the sure, the rising, the prevailing side. Merchants, heroes, politicians, may all weary themselves for very vanity. We are at a certainty. A king shall reign and prosper. "His Name shall endure for ever: his Name shall be continued as long as the sun: aud men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

MAY 31.—"*And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.*" John xxiv. 30.

THIS was not a *sacramental* meal, as when he took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and said, This is my body. Neither was it a *miraculous* meal, as when he took the loaves, and blessed them, and multiplied them. But an *ordinary* meal. Yet he blessed the food. And this he did always. And his example has the force of a law with all his followers—For, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk as he walked." Hence the command, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in *the name of the Lord Jesus*," *i. e.* as his disciples, who are not only to believe in him, but to *represent him*.

From *his* observing this practice, we may be sure that it is wise, and useful, and necessary. Sin has brought a curse upon all our enjoyments; and the blessing of God alone can take it off.

"How sweet our daily comforts prove,
"When they are season'd with His love."

But how true—

"'Tis all in vain till God has bless'd."

"Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Can he also abuse the bounties of Providence, who has implored the Divine benediction upon the use of them? Can he indulge in excess?—Will he not add to his faith temperance? It is lamentable, therefore, that such a duty should ever be omitted—or performed with haste and irreverence—as if the performer was ashamed of the performance.

— Let the Saviour's conduct also teach us not to confine our religion to extraordinary and sacred occasions. In all our ways let us acknowledge God. Morning and evening worship is good: but let us be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. It is well to enquire in his Temple: but let us abide with God in our calling. We must remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy; but the spirit of devotion is to actuate us during the week, and to induce us, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God. Tell me not what a man is in a storm —but in the calm. Not how he behaves himself in sickness—but in health. A Balaam may pray, Let me die the death of the righteous. A David prays, Unite my heart to fear thy Name. There is a goodness which depends upon impulse, not principle; upon outward excitement, not upon internal disposition.

There is a devotion that resembles the blaze of straw; but that which is spiritual is like the fire on the Jewish altar—kindled from above, and which never went out. It is a stream fed by a living fountain; not a sudden torrent, however wide or impetuous at the time, produced by the melting of the snow, or a sum-

mer's thunder-storm. The water, says the Saviour, that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

JUNE 1.—"*I am the vine.*" John xv. 5.

MINISTERS are not to preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. But he was his own subject—He preached himself. How could he have done otherwise, concerned as he was to be useful? for

> "None but Jesus; none but Jesus,
> "Can do helpless sinners good"—

And *he* knew this far better than we do.—And who was able to declare what he truly was, so well as himself?

— Here he calls himself the vine. A very easy and natural image. And natural images are the most preferable in divine things. Many writers and preachers love those allusions which show their learning, and which the uneducated cannot understand. Our Saviour never takes his comparisons from the sciences, and seldom from the arts; but from natural scenery, which is obvious and intelligible to all.

A vine is not so remarkable in its appearance as many other trees. In loftiness, it yields to the cedar. In strength, to the oak. In sightliness, to the palm tree and the fir. The greatness of Jesus was spiritual. He had no earthly pomp and riches. Like his kingdom, he was not of this world. Hence it was said, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should *desire* him."

The vine is renowned for its fertility. One single vine, planted by the Empress Lavinia, yielded one hundred and eight gallons of wine in one year—Many grapes grow on one cluster, many clusters on one branch, and many branches on one tree. How many have been saved by the Lord Jesus! In him all fulness dwells. In him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. What clusters were brought from Eshcol, to show Israel the goodliness and fruitfulness of Canaan! And what specimens of heaven; what earnests of the inheritance; what firstfruits of the Spirit, do faith and hope bring believers from him, even while they are in the Wilderness!

The nature of the produce of the vine is delightful and profitable. The fruit is sweet to the taste. The juice it yields, cheers and makes glad the heart of man—Give wine to those that be of heavy hearts. It was sometimes used medicinally. The good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the bleeding traveller. And he brings us health, and cure, and comfort, and delight, and more than angels' food; for

> "Never did angels taste, above,
> "Redeeming grace and dying love."

The vine also yields shade, and it was valued for this purpose in the East. Hence we so often read in the Scripture, of sitting under the vine and the fig-tree. They had walks and bowers made of these; and while the fruit refreshed them, the shelter screened them from the sun. And he is a shadow from the heat; and rescues us from the evil of every annoyance to which we are exposed. I sat, says the Church, under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

The image, therefore, is pleasing and striking, and aids us in our conceptions of him, and communion with him. Yet it teaches us as much by con-

trast, as by comparison. A vine is not always green. It does not always bear. It never bears twelve manner of fruits. It does not endure for ever—But all this is true of him.

The fruit of the vine, if taken too largely, will injure the partaker; but there is no danger here —while we are forbidden to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. The produce of the vine is only for the body, and for time: but his benefits are for the soul, and eternity. Many cannot obtain the advantages of the vine; but none, however poor and mean, are excluded from the participations of Christ. The image, therefore, is but a humble one, and falls far short of his glory. So does every thing that is employed to show forth his worth, his glory, or his grace.

"Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
"Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears:
"His beauties we can never trace,
"Till we behold him face to face.

"Oh! let me climb these lower skies,
"Where storms and darkness never rise!
"*There* he displays his powers abroad,
"And shines and reigns th' incarnate God!"

JUNE 2.—"*Ye are the branches.*" John xv. 5.

FOR whatever he is, they have a relation corresponding with it. Thus, if he is the king, they are the subjects. If he is the shepherd, they are the sheep. If he is the head, they are the members. Therefore, having said to his disciples, I am the vine, he adds—Ye are the branches.

This reminds us of their union with him. The vine and the branches are connected. The latter are even

parts of the former: and it would be absurd for a person to say, I did not hurt the vine; I only injured the branches. Why persecutest thou *me*? said the Saviour to Saul, who was persecuting his followers. He that touches them, touches the apple of his eye. And as he is sensible of their wrongs, so he feels every kindness shewn them; and says, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.

This gives them a character of likeness. The branches are the very same kind of wood as the vine; and the very same sap pervades them both. And they that are joined to the Lord are of one spirit. The same mind is in them which was also in Christ Jesus.

This shews their dependence. "The righteous shall flourish as a branch:" but the branch does not bear the tree, but the tree the branch. Whatever likeness there may be, in all things he has the pre-eminence. He is our life and strength. Abide, says he, in me: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing.

This proclaims their usefulness. The branches are the beauty and excellency of the vine; and *by* these, its vigour and fertility are displayed. He is glorified in his people. He makes them to blossom and yield fruit. He diffuses his goodness through their prayers and lives. In him is their fruit found, as to its source and support—but they bear it—they are the branches, and are filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Let me learn one thing from all this. Let me accustom myself to derive spiritual reflections from all the material objects around me. A taste for natural scenery is pleasing and good in itself. But let me not approach it, as a creature, only to enjoy;

or a philosopher, only to admire—but as a Christian, also, to improve. Let sense be a handmaid to faith. Let that which is seen and temporal, raise me to that which is unseen and eternal.

JUNE 3.—"—*Which is our hope.*" 1 Tim. i. 1.

MUCH has been said in praise of hope. It has been called the mainspring of motion. The soul of enterprise. The balm of life. The soother of care. And the healer of sorrow.

We are not, however, going to speak of hope in general. We therefore say nothing of the hope of the worldling, which is a thing of nought. Or of the hope of the Infidel, which is annihilation. Or of the hope of the Antinomian, which is a devil's dream. Or of the hope of the Pharisee, which is a spider's web. Or of the hope of the hypocrite, which is a lie in his right hand. But of *our* hope—as Christians. And what is this? Jesus Christ, says the Apostle—*he* "is *our* hope." He deserves and realizes the character four ways—He is our hope substantially, meritoriously, efficiently, and exemplarily.

He is the object of our hope. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? But *any* good will not answer the wishes of a believer. His supreme aim is the—principal, the—only good—

> "Sufficient in itself alone,
> "And needful, were the world our own"—

It is, to win Christ; to be found in him; and in him to be blessed with all spiritual blessings.—The Christian's hope is chiefly laid up for him in heaven. And is not He the essence of all the blessedness

there? The place is glorious: but what would it be without His presence? The company is attractive: but what would friends, and saints, and angels be, without communion with Him?—We sometimes hear it said, "Well—we are all hoping for the same heaven!"—But nothing can be more false. A natural man is hoping for one kind of heaven; a spiritual man, for another; and each herein follows his peculiar disposition. I cannot hope for what I do not love and desire. As a man, I may hope for a heaven that shall secure me from hell; and exempt me from all toil and trouble; and furnish me with things in which I feel pleasure. But it is only as a Christian, I can long to depart to be with Christ, which is far better—and be able to say,

"'Tis heav'n on earth to taste His love,
"To feel his quck'ning grace;
"And all the heaven I *hope* above,
"Is but to see his face."

— He is the ground of our hope. In proportion to the use and grandeur of a building should be the basis. Nothing can equal the vastness and value of the believer's expectation. If we are wise, therefore, we shall enquire what is to bear it up. And no other foundation can any man lay than that is laid, which is Christ. Every thing else we depend upon will prove sand. But here is rock: and he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. View him as incarnate—Why is not our condition as hopeless as that of devils? Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham—Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself also took part of the same. He assumed the nature he would save; and he will save, as surely as he assumed it. View him as the gift of God—God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten. What can discourage us now? If our unworthiness, or the

greatness of the blessing, could prove a hinderance to the Divine goodness, it would have operated earlier; and he would have withholden from the guilty *this* unspeakable gift—But He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also give us all things! But His goodness is wise goodness, just goodness. It must be as honourable to himself as it is beneficial to us—and we behold his Son set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness. Sin is punished, while it is pardoned. Even the Law has nothing to complain of in our deliverance—it is much more glorified in our salvation, than it would have been by our destruction. One died for all; and he was infinitely more than all. Do we question whether he finished the work that was given him to do; and whether it was an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour; and whether he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied? Behold him discharged from the grave, and ascending up on high, and receiving gifts for men, even for the rebellious, and entering into the holy place, there to appear in the presence of God for us! What can we desire more? If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more now, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Will not this suffice? He raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our *faith and hope might be in God.*

— He is the author of our hope. For it is not natural to us, neither is it derived from ourselves; but he produces it in us by his Holy Spirit. Means may be used; but the excellency of the power is of him, and not of them. Hence says the Apostle to those who were glorying in men, Who then is

Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? Every thing in the new world is done by the Spirit of Christ. Under a conviction of guilt enough to condemn us a thousand times over—did we find it an easy thing to hope in God at first, and believe that he was pacified towards us for all that we had done, and that we were accepted in the Beloved? Have we proved it an easy thing since, to keep this hope lively and flourishing, yea, to maintain it at all? How often should we have said, My hope is perished from the Lord, and have given all our profession up, but for "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," in glorifying him afresh—according to the promise, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

— He is also the model of our hope. For though he is unspeakably more than our example, he is nothing less; and the higher views we have taken of him do not hinder, but, indeed, the more require our saying, that the same mind which was in him must be in us—that we must walk ever as he walked—that we must pray as he prayed—fear as he feared—and hope as he hoped. And how did he hope? "I will," said he, "put my trust in Him." He was remarkable for this. It was not to quote prophecy, that his insulters, when he was on the cross, said, "He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God"—It was to reproach him for the confidence in God, which they knew he had professed to exercise. It will be well, if our enemies can revile us for nothing worse. David seems early to have been dedicated to God; but it was in the name of the Holy Child Jesus he spake, when he said, "Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly." From

his earliest infancy, from the first exercise of reason, he honoured him—Nor did he ever fail in his confidence in God. In every extremity he trusted in him. Even when in anguish on the cross, and dying, he cried, "*My* God, *my* God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—"Father, into *thy* hands I commit my spirit." His confidence, also, was equally cheerful. He sung a hymn when he was entering the Garden of Gethsemane. Though a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, instead of murmuring, he said, "In the midst of the Church will I sing praises unto Thee." Thus may I bear the image of the heavenly—till he shall appear, and I shall be perfectly like him, for I shall see him as he is.

JUNE 4.—"*The woman then left her water-pot.*" John iv. 28.

THREE reasons may be assigned for this—

Perhaps she left it from kindness to our Saviour and his disciples. His disciples had gone into the city to buy meat, and had just returned; and they were now going to partake of the homely fare. But for beverage, they had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep. She therefore leaves them her vessel, to enable them to draw, and drink. *Female* kindness, and contrivance, and accommodation, are as quick as thought; and need no prompter. I admire the simplicity of early hospitality. See Rebekah with Abraham's steward: "And she said, Drink, my lord; and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink." Ah! ye generous hearts! who wish to do good, and feel your want of power—do what you can; and

what you cannot, will never be required of you. Remember the Saviour's words: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

—Perhaps she left it from indifference. She was now so impressed and occupied with infinitely greater and better things, that she forgets the very errand that brought her to the well. The feelings of new converts are peculiarly strong and lively. The eternal realities and glories that open to their view, dazzle their minds, and render them incapable of distinctly observing other objects. Considering the infirmity of our nature, it is not to be wondered at, if the powers of the world to come, and the "one thing needful"—the care of the soul, should, for the time, engross all their attention, and make them *too* heedless of other claims.

Hence what we should censure in others, we excuse in young beginners, especially if they are suddenly awakened. I say, excuse—for we never wish to justify ignorance, imprudence, and rashness. God is not the God of confusion; "Let every thing," says the Apostle, "be done decently, and in order." Religion is not to draw us off from our business and callings. Neither are we to leave our places and stations in life, even in pursuit of things good in themselves. When the Demoniac had been dispossessed, he besought the Saviour that he might be with him—But "Jesus suffered him not; but said, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done for thee." And, says Paul to the Thessalonians, "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands"—to provide things honest in the sight of all men; to maintain your families without dependence; and have, to give to him that needeth;

and to preserve your religion from censure. We are not, therefore, to abandon our water-pots. We are not to be careless of our worldly substance; but to preserve and use it. Witness the cautions in Scripture against suretyship, and *backing bills*, and the admonition, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."—Yet those who are born from above, and bound for glory, are only strangers and pilgrims upon earth: and they who have found the Pearl of Great Price, will not, and cannot, feel towards worldly things as they once did. They cannot be so anxious to gain them; so overjoyed in possessing them; so depressed in losing them. And they will be willing to forsake, whatever the service of God requires them to part with, however dear or valuable. Thus Matthew, sitting at the Receipt of Custom, upon hearing the call, "Follow me," "arose and followed him."

— Perhaps she left it, as it would have proved a hinderance to her speed. The king's business requires haste. In this she was now engaged; and, burning with zeal, she could not bear the thought of losing a moment in communicating the knowledge she possessed; and of saying to her neighbours, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did—Is not this the Christ? She knew the importance of the case. And she knew the brevity and uncertainty of the opportunity. It was not the gratification of their curiosity—it was their life. And if he withdrew from the well before they arrived, the day of their visitation might never return.

— Upon the same principles, let us get rid of every impediment, and avoid every delay, not only in gaining good for ourselves, but in doing good to others. All is hanging—upon the moment! "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

JUNE 5.—*"Be thou their arm every morning."*
Is. xxxiii. 2.

THIS is a prayer for others. And, when we repair to the Throne of the Heavenly Grace, we should never forget our fellow Christians. But those will never pray earnestly, or even sincerely, for others, who do not pray for themselves. Every believer, therefore, includes himself in the number of those for whom he implores the blessing—"Be thou their arm every morning."

He is made sensible of his own weakness and insufficiency. He knows, he feels, and he increasingly knows and feels, his need—of an arm—a Divine arm—every morning.

— For what purpose?

— He needs this arm to defend him in all his dangers, and to keep him from all evil, especially the evil of sin, that it may not grieve him.

— He needs this arm to uphold him under his burdens. The pressure often urges him to exclaim "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me."

— He needs this arm to lean on, in all his goings. What a journey lies before him! And what step can he take alone! This is the image of the Church. She is represented as coming up out of the Wilderness, leaning on her Beloved.

— And, as this arm is necessary—so it is sufficient—and it is kindly held out in the promises and invitations of the Word—There, says God, "Let him take hold of my strength." And we take hold of it by faith and prayer.

— Let me then avail myself of the privilege—Be thou my arm every morning. Let me lean—and converse with thee. Let me lean—and feel thee at my side. Let me lean—and go forward without dismay or discouragement. "Because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in

hope. **For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell**; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

JUNE 6.—"*And walk humbly with thy God.*" Micah vi. 8.

WHY not joyfully? There is a foundation laid for this. It is their privilege. It is said, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord. This is not, however, absolutely necessary. In a sense, Christians may go on without it. We have known much self-denial, and deadness to the world, and spirituality of devotion, and zeal for the glory of God and the welfare of others, in persons who may be said to be saved by hope, rather than confidence. But with regard to humbleness of mind, this is indispensable—*always*, and in—*every* thing: and *no* progress can be made without it. So that when Luther was asked what was the first step in religion, he replied, Humility; and when asked what was the second, and the third, answered in the same way. And Peter admonishes Christians to be clothed with humility; as if he would say, This is to cover, to defend, to distinguish, to adorn all. But how is our walking humbly with God to appear?

It is to appear in connexion with Divine truth. Here God is our teacher; and if, as learners, we walk humbly with him, we shall cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ: we shall sacrifice the pride of reason; and having ascertained that the

Scriptures are the Word of God, and discovered what they really contain, we shall not speculate upon their principles, but admit them on the Divine authority. Nothing can be more proud and vain than to believe no more than we can comprehend, or can make appear to be credible in itself. Is not this founding our faith on knowledge, and not on testimony? Is not this trusting God like a discredited witness in Court, whose deposition is regarded only as it is collaterally supported? Is this honouring his wisdom, or veracity? Is this receiving with meekness the engrafted Word? Is this receiving the kingdom of Heaven as a little child?

— It will appear in connexion with Divine ordinances. Here we walk with God as worshippers; and if we walk humbly with him, we shall have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence, and with godly fear. We have, indeed, in Christ, boldness and access with confidence; but it is by the faith of him: that is, by the confidence of one who feels his encouragement derived from a mediator. We may come boldly to the Throne of Grace: but it is to obtain *mercy* and find *grace* to help us—the boldness, therefore, can only be the boldness of the indigent and the guilty, who have nothing of their own to plead. We approach him as a father: but if I am a father, says He, where is mine honour? We have heard some address the Supreme Being with such a levity and freedom as they would not have used to a fellow-creature a little above their own level in life. We should keep our feet when we go to the House of God. He is in heaven, and we upon the earth, therefore our words should be *few*.

— It will appear in connexion with his mercies. Here we walk with God, as our benefactor: and if we walk humbly with him, we shall own and feel that we have no claim upon God for any thing we possess or enjoy. Am I indulged? I am not worthy

of the least of all his mercies. Am I distinguished?

"Not more than others I deserve,
"Yet God has giv'n me more."

Am I successful? I shall not ascribe it to my own skill, or the power of my own arm. I shall not sacrifice to my own net, or burn incense to my own drag. The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

— It will appear, with regard to our trials. Here we walk with God, as our reprover and corrector: and if we walk humbly, we shall not charge him foolishly; we shall not arraign his authority; or ask, What doest Thou? We shall not expose ourselves to the reflection, Thou hast smitten them, and they have not grieved. We shall be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live. We shall be dumb, and open not our mouth, because He does it. Or if we speak, it will be to acknowledge that his judgments are right, and that in faithfulness he has afflicted us. "I mourn; but I do not murmur. I wonder not that my troubles are so heavy; but that they are so light. I more than deserve them all—and I need them all. I would not only bear, but kiss the rod. It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

— It will appear, with regard to our conditions. Here we walk with God, as our disposer and governor: and if we walk humbly, we shall hold ourselves at his control; we shall be willing that he should choose our inheritance for us; we shall not lean to our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge him. We shall be satisfied with our own allotment; and learn, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content. We shall abide in the callings wherein his providence has placed us, and not be eager to rise into *superior offices,* feeling our unfitness for them, and fearful

f their perils; saying, "Lord, my heart is not aughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise ıyself in great matters, or in things too high for ıe. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is ven as a weaned child."

— It will appear with regard to our qualification nd ability for our work. Here we walk with God, s our helper and strength; and if we walk humbly, 're shall be sensible of our insufficiency for all the urposes of the Divine life: that we know not 'hat to pray for as we ought, unless the Spirit itself elpeth our infirmities; that the preparation of the eart, and the answer of the tongue, are from the ord; that with regard to the exercise of every race, and the performance of every duty, as the ranch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide n the vine, no more can we, except we abide in im—for without him we can do nothing. Did 'eter walk humbly with him, when, even after he warning he had received, he leaned on his own esolution for superior constancy? Here, humility s—to fear always; and to—pray, Hold thou me up, nd I shall be safe.

— It will appear with regard to the whole of ur recovery. Here we walk with God, as a Saviour, nd if we walk humbly, we shall not go about to stablish our own righteousness, but submit ourelves unto the righteousness which is of God; and cknowledge that we have nothing to glory in efore Him. Not by works of righteousness which had done, but according to his mercy he saved ne. I look to the rock whence I was hewn, and o the hole of the pit whence I was digged. How ong did he wait for me! What pains were used n vain to bring my heart to him! He was ound of me, when I sought him not. And how ittle have I attained! I am still an unprofitable

servant—the sins of my holy things would condemn me—I must look only for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. If I am called, he called me by his grace. If I have a good hope, it is a good hope through grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Happy this humble walker with God! God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

"All joy to the believer! He can speak—
"Trembling yet happy, confident yet meek.
"Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
"And cut up all my follies by the root,
"I never trusted in an arm but thine,
"Nor hop'd, but in thy righteousness divine:
"My pray'rs and alms, imperfect and defiled,
"Were but the feeble efforts of a child;
"Howe'er perform'd, it was their brightest part,
"That they proceeded from a grateful heart.
"Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,
"Forgive their evil, and accept their good;
"I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
"Is what it was, dependence upon thee—
"While struggling in the vale of tears below,
"That never fail'd, nor shall it fail me now.
"Angelic gratulations rend the skies;
"Pride falls unpitied, never more to rise;
"Humility is crown'd, and Faith receives the prize."

JUNE 7.—"*The Lord is our Judge.*"
Isaiah xxxii. 22.

IN ancient times the character of a judge was united with that of a sovereign. To deliver the award of acquittal, condemnation, or pardon, was the

exclusive prerogative of majesty. Even in our days the sentence pronounced by the appointed expositors of the law must have the fiat of the monarch, before it can be fulfilled.

The word Judge is frequently in the Scripture synonimous with Ruler. But as here, the Lord, as "our Judge," is distinguished from the Lord, as "our Lawgiver" and "our king:" the term should be taken in its more peculiar meaning. And this view of God should blend with every other character he sustains: not to depress hope; but to prevent presumption: not to hinder our access to God; but to sanctify us when we come nigh him: not to inspire gloom; but to exclude from us all that carelessness and levity so inconsistent with our dependence and responsibility. "If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

He is our future judge. So then, says the Book, every one of us must give account of himself to God. And God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. And who could bear the thought of this process, without the knowledge of a Mediator! The only way to find safety in that day, is to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; and to be found in him. He is our Advocate with the Father; and he is the propitiation for our sins. The charges brought against us are all true; and we have nothing to offer even in our own extenuation. But we appeal to our surety—and he answers for us. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.

He is our Judge at present. And the Apostle speaks of it as a privilege of the Gospel Dispensation, that "we are come to God, the Judge of all."

Are you perplexed about the path of duty, while importance is attached to every step, and yet you must move forward? Refer yourselves to his unerring counsel. Be influenced and encouraged by the command and the promise—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Is your spiritual state doubtful to your own minds? And do you dread delusion? Present the case before Him; and say—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Do you lie under the misapprehension of friends, and the reproaches of enemies? Say, with Job, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." How often did David turn from the groundless and cruel censures of men, to Him who knoweth all things! "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal." Are you reviled? Revile not again. Do you suffer? Threaten not—but commit yourselves to Him that judgeth righteously. It is pleasing to have the approbation of our fellow-creatures; but there is—a higher—a juster—a more merciful tribunal. It is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment. He that judgeth us is the Lord. "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

JUNE 8.—"*The grace that is in Christ Jesus.*" 2 Tim. ii. 1.

GRACE is connected with the whole of our recovery as sinners. It is all in all in every part of our salvation. Whether he is chosen, or redeemed, or justified, or converted, or sanctified, or preserved, or comforted—the believer will acknowledge, By the grace of God I am what I am—not I, but the grace of God which is with me.

But where is this grace to be found? The Apostle tells us, when he speaks of it, as the resource of Timothy, both as a minister and a Christian—Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is *in Christ Jesus*. As mediator, he is the principle, and treasury of it, with regard *to us*.

It is in him exclusively. And we may as well think of finding snow on the bosom of the sun, or water to cool the tongue in hell, as to think of finding, elsewhere than in him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. As Pharaoh said to the famishing multitudes that cried to him for corn, "Go unto Joseph, he has all the corn;" so perishing sinners are sent to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places—in Christ. If there was only one well in the vicinity of a place, this would soon become the scene of concourse, and hither all the inhabitants would repair or die—And to him shall the gathering of the people be. If any man thirst, said he, let him come unto me and drink. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other Name given under heaven among men, whereby they must be saved. And what Christian will refuse to join in the ascription, Of *his* fulness have *all* we received, and grace *for* grace?

It is in him all-sufficiently. For it is not in him as water in a vessel, which, though as large as the Brazen Sea, would, by constant drawing, be soon drawn dry; but as water in a spring, which,

though always flowing, is always as full as ever. It is not in him like light in a lamp, which, however luminous, consumes while it shines, and will soon go out in darkness; but like light in the sun, which, after shining for so many ages, is undiminished, and is as able as ever to bless the earth with his beams. There never has been a deficiency in him; and there never will—never can—for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

It is in him relatively. He has it for the use and advantage of his people. Is he head over all things? It is to his body, the Church. Has he power given him over all flesh? It is that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. Is he exalted at the right hand of God? It is to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Did he receive gifts? It was for men, and even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Many trustees are faithless to their office. The rich have wealth for the poor; but often the poor share very little of it—for it is either hoarded by avarice, or squandered by extravagance; and the design of the proprietor is subverted by the steward. But here there is no danger of this. He to whom all our welfare is entrusted will be faithful, not as a servant, like Moses; but as a Son over his own house. His work falls in with every disposition of his heart. He so loves the recipients of his bounty, that he even died for them, and rose again. The power and authority to bless them, was the joy set before him; for which he endured the Cross, and despised the shame.

And it is wisely in him. Could we *see* no reason for it, we ought to believe in the propriety of his placing it in him, rather than in ourselves: for God does all things well: and we may always infer the rectitude of his conduct even from his *adopting* it. And when he has *told* us, too, that a

articular course of action "became him," it is bsurd to speculate, and profane to object. But it i easy to apprehend the wisdom of God in his being leased that *in him* should all fulness dwell. It is ius infinitely secure. Adam had all in his own and, and soon failed, and ruined his whole race. ınd should we act better than he? But "this man bideth ever:" and therefore the Covenant, of which e is the head, is everlasting, ordered in all things nd *sure*. By this appointment also, there is ren- ered necessary a communion between Christ and hristians, equally honourable to him, and beneficial) them. Let me explain this by a simple reference. n infant, when born, if left to himself, would erish; for he is entirely unequal to his own sup- ort. But he is not abandoned. Provision is made r his nourishment—Where? In another. In whom? he one—above all others interested in him—and hose relation to him—whose anguish on his be- alf—whose love—will always yield him a welcome ccess to her breast: and the mutual action of giving ıd receiving will endear the babe to the mother, ıd the mother to the babe. It is well we cannot ve independent of Christ Jesus. How much are is glory and our welfare connected with the blessed ecessity of our daily and hourly intercourse with im!

JUNE 9.—"*And a certain man, lame from his other's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at e gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful, to k alms of them that entered into the Temple.*"

Acts iii. 2.

WHAT an object of distress was here! Some, if ıey are poor, are strong and healthful; and limbs

and labour are sufficient for them. And some, if they are sickly and infirm, have wealth; or relations and friends that can afford them support. But here penury and helplessness are combined. The sufferings of some are accidental, and endured for a season only: but this man's affliction entered the world with him, and upwards of forty years he had endured the calamity.

What a vale of tears is this earth! To what a variety of evils are the human race exposed! Oh! could we see all!—could we see a little of the millionth part! What is a burial-ground? a field of battle? a hospital? every disordered body? but a commentary upon sin, as the text! For sin

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

— Can we see such a case as this, and not be thankful for our exemption and preservation? Shall we say, He deserved to be such a cripple; but I did not? Or rather, shall we not say, By the grace of God we are what we are?

Such an instance of misery is presented to try our disposition. The eye affecteth the heart; and was designed to do it. None but a Priest or Levite will pass by on the other side. Such sights will attract the notice of the humane, and the merciful, and move all his bowels of compassion, and put in requisition all his powers of relief. Job, even with regard to his prosperity, which too often makes men insensible and careless, could make this appeal: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him: the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame."

As the only expedient of this poor wretch was begging; so, to give him an advantage, they placed him daily at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, to ask alms of them that went in. This was wise. Surely he who is going to seek mercy, will be ready to shew it. Surely he who is going to pray for pardon, will not be unforgiving and implacable. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." What communion hath light with darkness? What fellowship can the cruel and uncharitable have with Him who is love itself?

Piety without benevolence is hypocrisy. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." The tongue of men and angels, without charity, is as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. The gift of prophecy, the understanding of all mysteries and all faith, so that we could remove mountains, would be nothing without charity. How such a man, whatever be his profession, can be a partaker of Divine Grace, perplexed even an inspired Apostle. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

How well he adds—"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

JUNE 10.—"*He delighteth in mercy.*"
Micah vii. 18.

CAUSES are best discovered in their effects. We determine the nature of the spring by the quality of the streams. The tree is known by the fruits. We judge of men's principles and dispositions, by their pursuits and conduct. God himself, so to speak, submits to be examined in the same way. To ascertain what he is, we have but to consider what he does. The things the Scripture testifies concerning him, are confirmed and exemplified by the facts to which it refers us. Thus says the Church—"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God." Is he called, "The God of all grace?" "The Father of mercies?" Is it said, "He is rich in mercy?" "He delighteth in mercy?" Let us pause, and reflect; and we shall find the proofs and illustrations more wonderful than the assertion itself.

"What hath God wrought," to gain the confidence of our guilty, and therefore foreboding and misgiving, minds! for this is the first step in the return of a sinner to God—we can only be saved by hope. And here let us follow the example of the inspired John—What is it that arrests and enraptures his attention? "Herein is love." Where? In what? "Herein is love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Not that he would overlook the other doings of God; but here *he* saw most clearly that "God is love." God's soul delights in his own Son, yet he would seem to delight more in mercy: for when he met with him and us on Calvary, he said, *Thou* shalt die, and *they* shall live. It therefore pleased the Lord to bruise *him*; that by his stripes *we* might be healed; and, through his sweet-smelling sacrifice, become dearer to God than if we had never sinned. And we must here

take in, not only the expensiveness of the act, but the character of the objects. It is the reasoning of another Apostle: "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And having made the provision, so that all things are now ready—would he endeavour to awaken our attention to it? would he send forth the ministry of reconciliation to beseech us to accept it—unless he delighted in mercy?

He delights, also, not only in the exercise of mercy *to* us—but *by* us. He, therefore, would not leave mercy to the operation of reason and religion only; but, as our Maker, he has rendered it a law of our being. By our very physical constitution pity is an unavoidable emotion—When we see the pain and distress of a fellow-creature, the eye affecteth the heart. We involuntarily feel an uneasiness, which prompts us to succour him—even to relieve ourselves. As far, indeed, as this is implanted in us, it is a mere instinct—But who produced it there? Who made it natural? Who rendered it so difficult to be subdued and destroyed?—but a Being who delighteth in mercy? Besides, though it be originally an instinct only, by cherishing it, we render it a virtue; and, by exciting and exercising it from religious motives, we turn it into a Christian grace.

And see what stress he has laid upon it in his Word. How often does he enjoin it! How dreadfully has he threatened the neglect of it! And what promises has he made to the practice of it! "He shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy." "But blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He has told us, that no clearness of knowledge, no rectitude of opinion, no fervour of zeal, no constancy of attendance on ordinances, no talking of Divine things: will be a compensation for charity. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth

his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" And hence the pre-eminence our Saviour gives it in the proceedings of the last day. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." The language has been perverted—for men dream of merit, where, above all things, we need mercy. This word "for" is here not causative, but evidential—just as we may say, the spring is come, *for* the birds sing; the singing of the birds does not cause the coming of the spring, but is the effect and proof of it. But even this distinction affords the mercyless no favour: for though the practice here so noticed, be not the procuring of the blessedness, it is the character of the blessed. On every ground, therefore, the man who is a stranger to it is not entitled to hope. For which reason, too, our Lord goes on to the subjects of condemnation. And who are these? Tyrants? robbers? murderers of fathers and mothers? perjured persons? No—but the slothful and the selfish—the unkind tongue—the close hand—the unfeeling heart—the unpitying eye—the foot that knew not the door of misery. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Let us therefore not only believe and admire; *but* let us be followers of Him who delighteth in

ıercy. We cannot love him, unless we are con-
erned to please him; and we cannot please him,
nless we are like-minded with him.—Neither can
'e enjoy him. Resemblance is the foundation of
ur communion with him. He only that dwelleth
ı love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. "Be
E THEREFORE MERCIFUL, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER,
'HO IS IN HEAVEN, IS MERCIFUL."

JUNE 11.—"*And it came to pass, that when Isaac
ıas old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not
ee, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him,
Ay son: and he said unto him, Behold here am I.
Ind he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the
ay of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee,
hy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the
eld, and take me some venison; and make me savoury
ıeat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may
at; that my soul may bless thee before I die.*"
Gen. xxvii. 1—4.

N Isaac's blindness we see one of the frequent
ccompaniments of age. Age is generally an aggre-
ate of privations, diseases, and infirmities. If, by
eason of strength, we reach fourscore years, the
trength then becomes labour and sorrow: labour
ı the preserving, and sorrow in the possession.

"Our vitals, with laborious strife,
"Bear up the crazy load;
"And drag the dull remains of life
"Along the tiresome road."

powerful reason why we should remember our
reator in the days of our youth, that we may have
resource, when the evil days come, in which

we shall say, I have no pleasure. What a privilege, when exercised with loss of sight, and of hearing; with trembling of limbs, and sleepless nights; and fearful apprehensions, and failure of desire: to have God for the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever: and to hear him saying, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

— The reflection of Isaac upon his mortality may be adopted by every individual, whatever his condition, or health, or age. All are ignorant of the time of their dissolution. For the human race dies at all periods, as well as in all circumstances: and we know not what a day may bring forth. But when Isaac says, "I know not the day of my death," he means that it was near; and that every day might be reckoned as his last. Death is not far from every one of us. But while, as the proverb says, the young may die, the old must die. And it becomes the aged to think frequently and seriously of their departure as at hand—to prepare for it—and to regard zealously the call of every present duty. It was the prayer of Moses, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." It was the profession of our Lord and Saviour, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work." It was the admonition of Solomon: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Thus Isaac was roused into a concern to finish his work before he finished his course: "Now, therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."—Not afterward. In like

anner Elijah, when waiting for his ascension into aven, said to Elisha, "Ask now what I shall do r thee, *before* I be taken up from thee"—believing s intercourse with him, and his acting for him, ould then be terminated. This is a solemn, and ould be a useful thought. Look at your children, ur relations, your friends, your neighbours, and e in what way you can serve your generation. ow you can bless them by your prayers, your couns, your example, your liberality—but all these portunities are confined to life—and this life is vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then nisheth away! Isaac did well in seizing the prent moment to set his house in order before his ath. But there are two things in which he was ameable.

First. He shows too great a regard for the inlgence of his appetite. It is mournful to see a od man, and especially an old man, instead of ortifying the deeds of the body, studying his senal gratification, and making provision for the flesh, t to fulfil the wants, but the lusts thereof. Carages are dragged as they are going down hill.

Secondly. He was more influenced by natural fection, than a regard to the will of God. He ished to make Esau heir; but God had expressly clared, "the elder shall serve the younger." Isaac uld not have been ignorant of this. Had he rgotten it? Or did he disregard it? Here we e his frailty. But this does not render the purse of God of none effect. His counsel shall stand, d he will do all his pleasure.—Rebecca, on the her hand, was fond of Jacob—and a father has no ance against a mother, who has a favourite whom e is determined to advance; especially such a lfish, crafty, cunning creature as was here at work. ebecca's aim, indeed, fell in with God's design: t this concurrence arose, not from her piety, but r partiality. Her conduct was unjustifiable and

sinful: for we must not do evil that good may come. She had the Divine promise on the side of her preference; and she should have rested in the Lord, and waited patiently for him; and not have fretted herself in any wise to do evil. "He that believeth maketh not haste." Had she quietly committed her way unto the Lord, he would have brought it to pass, without those wretched consequences that afflicted the family. For God uses instruments without approving of them: and though he makes the folly and passions of men to praise him, he fails not to prove that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake him, and to act without his fear in our hearts.

— How painful would it be to go on, and see a mother teaching her child to tell lies; and to see a son imposing on the blindness of an aged father! We have no notion that Rebecca was ever religious. And what proof have we that Jacob was pious at this time? Was he not converted in his journey from Beersheba to Haran? At Bethel God met with him; and there he spake with *us*.

JUNE 12.—"*And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.*" Exod. xiii. 21, 22.

THIS institution was necessary: for there was no path in the desert; and they had no maps, no pioneers, no guides. But, says God, I have not brought you out of Egypt to leave you to wander and perish in the Wilderness—Behold your Conductor, to the rest and the inheritance which the

Lord your God giveth you. Accordingly, by this, they were to be regulated in all their journeying. As this rose, they rose; as this paused, they paused; as this turned to the right hand or to the left, they turned. It sometimes called them to leave a more endeared spot, and to stop in a less inviting scene; but they were not at liberty to cling to the one, or decline the other: the signal was instantly decisive. This pillar was obviously nothing less than a real miracle—yet how little were the observers affected by it!—They sinned with this hovering prodigy always over them; and even committed idolatry! We are prone to ascribe too much moral efficacy to such supernatural appearances. They soon became as unimpressive and uninfluential as the ordinary means of grace are with us.

It was a symbol of the Divine Presence—"The Lord was in the pillar." It was this nearness of God that insured their safety, and gave them their distinction and pre-eminence. There he was always at hand, always in view. "And," says Moses, "what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?"

But how extensively adapted was this provision to their state and exigencies! It was both a pillar of a cloud, and a pillar of fire, to lead them in the way—The one appearance was for the day; the other, for the night. Fire by day would have added to the dazzling and fervidness of a burning sky—the pillar was therefore a cloud by day, and screened them like a large umbrella from the scorching rays of the sun. Cloud by night would have added to the gloom, the darkness, and the dread of danger—the pillar was therefore a fire by night, to lick up the unwholesome damps, to warm the chilling atmosphere, and to afford them a light, by which they could see to move about in their tents, and also to travel, as they often did after the sun was set.

If this ordinance shewed his wisdom and goodness; the continuance of the blessing evinced his patience —for, notwithstanding their unworthiness, and their provocations, and their various corrections; this pillar was not taken away from before the people, till they reached the border of Jordan, and came to their journey's end!

He has a people for his Name now. They are only strangers and pilgrims on earth, bound for a better country, that is, a heavenly. This they would never reach, if they were left to themselves. But the God of Israel is with them. They have not the same sensible proof of his presence as the Jews had. But they have real evidence of it; and it is satisfactory to their own minds. He keeps them from falling. He accommodates himself to their conditions. He is a very present help in trouble. He makes his goodness to pass before them. He leads them by his Word, and his Spirit, and his providence. He has also said, I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee. Therefore they may boldly say, This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto *death*.

"Thus, when our first release we gain,
"From Sin's old yoke and Satan's chain,
"We have this desart world to pass,—
"A dang'rous and a tiresome place.

"He feeds and clothes us all the way;
"He guides our footsteps lest we stray;
"He guards us with a pow'rful hand;
"And brings us to the promised land."

JUNE 13.—"*The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar.*" Num. xvi. 38.

HE had solemnly forewarned and admonished the rebels themselves before they suffered: and thus,

in wrath, he remembered mercy. When K
Dathan, and Abiram, who headed the consp
were buried alive; and their companions, the
hundred and fifty princes, men of honour,
burned with fire; he would make them bea
and prevent others from coming into the same
demnation. Orders, therefore, were given to
up the censers in which they had dared to
incense; and make of them broad plates to
the altar of burnt offering—that they might
a sign unto the children of Israel:" *i.e.* a men
to the Levites, and the comers thereunto, o
revolt of these men; and that they were pun
for invading an office which God had forbidden

Whence we note, that the sin which is hurt
the transgressors, should be useful to the observe

"These sinners against their own souls!"
whenever men sin, they sin *against thems*
Society cannot exist without laws: and law
nothing without penalties. Connivance at the
would be cruelty to the innocent. In every
ordered government crimes are punished.
will they, can they, escape in the empire
Being, holy in all his ways, and righteous i
his works? What would you think of a magis
who bore the sword in vain? and who was not a
to evil doers, as well as a praise to them that do
What would you think of him, if, when you bre
before him the incendiary of your house, o
murderer of your child, he should say, Oh,
does not regard me—and smile, and say—G
peace! We dislike the word vindictive just
there seems something malignant in it: but
stitute in the room of it, the vindicatory, or pu
justice of God, and we contend that this is e
tial to the excellency of his character; and
you could not esteem, or even love him, wi
it. What regard could you have for a being,
equally respected lies and truth? cruelty and

ness? a Nero and a Howard? We readily own, that when anger and wrath are ascribed to God in the Scriptures, they do not imply any thing in him like passion in us: but only principle. But principle they do establish: and this principle is the soul of order; adherence to rectitude; determination to punish.

And we may see this denounced in his threatenings. For his wrath is *revealed* from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. If this book be true; the wicked shall not stand in his sight. He hateth all workers of iniquity.

He has also confirmed and exemplified it in his conduct. Look to heaven, and see the angels sinning against themselves, and cast down to hell. See Adam and Eve driven from the garden of Eden. See the Flood carrying away the world of the ungodly. See the inhabitants of the Plain. And Pharaoh. And the nations of Canaan. And the Jews, though so peculiarly indulged of God. Yea, and good men—he even visits *their* transgressions with a rod: and though he *forgives* their iniquities, he takes vengeance on their inventions. See Moses and Aaron forbidden to enter the Land of Promise: and Eli and David so awfully judged in this life—And if these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And if the righteous are recompensed in the earth, how much more the sinner and the ungodly!

It would be easy to trace the injury of sin with regard to every thing of which the welfare of the sinner is compounded. His connexions ought to be dear to him. But how does he sin against these! How does the wicked child rend the heart of his parents, and bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave! How does the husband, by his vices, instead of providing for those of his own house, reduce the wife he ought to love even as himself, to indigence and wretchedness; and her hapless

ees along with her! What a blessing is health. t how does he sin against this! By intem- ance and sensuality, he is made to possess the quities of his youth, which lie down with him in dust. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. So hatred and malice. And so are all those corroding ieties and fears which they must feel who have confidence in God, or hope of heaven. Reputa- n is desirable, as it enables us to live in the eem of others; and valuable as it is, an instru- nt of usefulness—a good name, says Wisdom lf, is better than great riches. But who regards sinner? Who confides in him? What is his ndship? or his promise? The name of the wicked ll rot. A wicked man is loathsome, and cometh shame. We must be measured, and weighed, our souls. The mind is the standard of the n. This is the seat of happiness or misery. But that sinneth against me, says God, wrongeth own soul. Wrongs it of peace—for there is no ce to the wicked. Wrongs it of liberty and asure—for he is in the *gall* of bitterness, and in *bond* of iniquity. Wrongs it of safety—for wrath of God abideth on him: he is condemned eady.

But let not these sinners suffer in vain. They our martyrs. They die and perish for us. Their s should be our gain; and their destruction our vation.

The first advantage we may derive from an obser- tion of the sins and sufferings of others, is the nfirmation of our faith. And nothing can tend re to establish our belief in the truth of the ripture, than to take its declarations and decisions, d compare them with the documents of men's lives. e Bible tells us that the way of transgressors is rd. That they proceed from evil to evil. That a le leaven leaveneth the whole lump. That the mpanion of fools shall be destroyed. That the

love of money is the root of all evil. And who has not—seen this, as well as—read it?

Another benefit, is gratitude. When we see the wicked, we see what *we* should have been, but for preventing and distinguishing grace. Who made me to differ? Have I a heart of flesh, while they are insensible? Am I light in the Lord, while they are darkness? Am I walking in the way everlasting, while destruction and misery is in their paths? By the grace of God, I am what I am.

The observation should also awaken and excite zeal. Surely none so much need our compassion, as those who are destroying themselves for ever. We talk of doing good. What advantage can we procure a fellow creature like that godliness, which is profitable unto all things? What enemy can we rescue him from, like his lusts and vices? If we convert a sinner from the error of his way, we save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

It should also serve to wean us from the present world. What a bedlam it is! what a sink of corruption! What righteous soul is not daily, hourly, vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly? Thus the ear, the eye, the heart, is constantly sickened. We behold the transgressors, and are grieved. O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men. O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest—with the spirits of just men made perfect—dwelling in love, and dwelling in God!

Finally. Let us fetch from it, warnings. When Daniel, addressing Belshazzar, reminded him of his father's pride and destruction, he aggravates his guilt, by saying, "Thou knewest all this." When the Apostle mentions "the sins and plagues that Israel knew," he says, "Now, these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye *idolaters*, as were some of them: as it is written,

The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three-and-twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now, all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

And surely, O my soul, if the sins of others may be rendered thus profitable, I ought to be concerned to gain something from my own. Let me learn wisdom from my follies; and strength from my weakness; and standing from my very falls. Let me see more of my depravity; and put on humbleness of mind; and apply to the Blood of Sprinkling; and never more trust in my own heart, but be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus: and be sober and vigilant; and, till I am beyond the reach of evil, pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

JUNE 14.—"*Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?*" John xiv. 9.

— HE had been with Philip and his fellow-disciples corporeally; for the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, and they beheld his glory. But his bodily presence was confined to Judea, and few knew him after the flesh. And soon he was known so no more, for he was received up into heaven. But it is

remarkable, that while on earth, he evinced that his efficiency was not dependent on his bodily presence; for he performed cures at a distance, as we see in the case of the nobleman's son, and the centurion's servant, who were healed by no application, but simply by his volition—as if to encourage the belief, that when removed hence, he could still operate in our world.

And if his word is to be relied upon, he is with his people now. What was his promise to his ministers? to his Churches? to individuals? "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—Therefore he has either given promises which he is unable to fulfil, or though now in heaven, he is with his disciples on earth—with them specially, graciously, spiritually. Effects prove the existence of the cause. The operation of the workman shews his presence. And that "*his* Name is near, his wondrous works declare." He has done enough *in* the Christian, to demonstrate that he is *with* him—and he hath said, I will never *leave* thee, nor *forsake* thee.

— Yet he says to Philip—"Hast thou not known me?" Philip was not entirely ignorant of him. But he knew him not sufficiently; he knew him not comparatively—he knew him not, considering how he might have known him. And is not this the case with us? Some have very little knowledge of any kind. They never guide even the common affairs of this life with discretion. They seem incapable of improvement. Even suffering does not teach them wisdom. "Experience," says Franklin, "is a dear school; yet fools will learn in no other." And many do not learn even in this. Yet the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. We live in a

land of vision; we have Sabbaths, and Bibles, and religious ordinances and teachers—yet as to a knowledge of the peculiar truths of the Gospel, and the reality of Christian experience, numbers are as ignorant as Heathens—"The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not." Must we go on? What do many Christians, real Christians, who have long had the great Teacher with them—what do even they know? What do they know of their own interest in him? Are they not yet unable to determine what their spiritual condition is, and to say, with Thomas, *my* Lord and *my* God?—How little do they know of his salvation! How little of the glories of his person! How little of the nature of his dispensations towards them: so that they are confounded with the fresh discoveries they make of the evils of their own hearts—perplexed with their afflictions—desponding if difficulties multiply, and they see no means, or way of escape—and ready to conclude that he has shut out their prayers, because he does not immediately and sensibly answer them:—all from their knowing so little of the *manner* in which he deals with his people.

Yet the defectiveness of their knowledge is very censurable, especially after *long* intimacy with Him. Hence the Apostle reproaches the Hebrews: "When for the time ye ought to have been teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Hence our Lord said to his disciples on another occasion: "Are ye also yet without understanding?" And here again he says: "Have I been *so long* with you, and *yet* hast thou not known me, Philip?" He had scarcely been three years with them then; and he had very gradually developed himself, and kept back many things for a future communication. Yet it was a long period, considering its importance and privileges. And always having access to him, with their inquiries; and hearing his discourses; and witnessing all his conduct; they ought to have gained much more than

they did. But they were slow of heart, and made very little progress, as we see by their various mistakes and embarrassments. Yet what right have we to cast a stone at them? How few, how poor, how wretched have been our attainments!—And yet he has been much longer with many of us—ten—twenty—forty years—years, too, abounding with every assistance. Four things ought to make us blush at the thought of this.

First. The necessity and value of the knowledge we have made so little proficiency in. How much depends upon it—our usefulness—our preservation from error—our peace and comfort—and our progress in the Divine life: for though we may grow in knowledge without growing in grace, we cannot grow in grace without growing in knowledge. Religion does not act upon us mechanically, but morally; *i.e.* through the influence of just views and motives.

Secondly. Some have made far greater advancement in much less time, and with very inferior advantages. They set out long after; but they soon passed us on the road. They have had very little pious intercourse, and have seldom heard a gospel sermon. Yet when we converse with them; and observe them in the relations, duties, and trials of life—how much below them must we feel!

Thirdly. Our obligations and responsibility rise with our means and opportunities. What an advantage are pious relations! What a privilege is a gospel ministry! What a precious talent is time! Where is conscience, while we look at our improvement of all these? Where much is given, much will be required.

Lastly. Our unprofitableness is the subject of divine disappointment and complaint. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" *The* thought of displeasing and dishonouring him is

nothing to some. But shall *we* provoke, and grieve his Holy Spirit? Can we who love him and know what he has done for us—can we be insensible to the Saviour's decision—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples?"

What remains—but that we admire and adore the patience of Him who still bears with us, though we have so often constrained him to ask, "How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"—And let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us guard against indecision and sloth. Let us be diligent in the use of all the means of religious improvement. Let us not cease to pray that we may be "filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

"Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning. And he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

JUNE 15.—"*When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.*"

Deut. xxxii. 8.

THIS is an important and interesting communication. It supplies us with two facts.

First. That *God* originally divided the nations their inheritance. When, after the Deluge, he gave the new earth to the children of men, he did not throw

it in among them, so to speak, for a kind of scramble, that each might seize what he could: but he assigned them their several portions, that the discontented might not invade the peaceful, nor the mighty prey upon the weak. God permits what he does not approve: but nothing can be more contrary to his design and pleasure, than for powerful states to invade and incorporate little ones. And the crime generally punishes itself. Such unjust and forced accessions add nothing to the safety, strength, or happiness, of the acquirers; but become sources of uneasiness, corruption, and revolt—so difficult is it to suppress old attachments, and patriotical instincts that are almost equal to the force of Nature. Paul justifies the sentiment of Moses: "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."

Secondly. In the arrangement of the limits and conditions of mankind, He had an especial reference to the future commonwealth of Israel. For they were by far the most important detachment of the human race. They were the Lord's portion, and the lot of his inheritance. They were the depositaries of revealed religion—the heirs of the righteousness which is by faith. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; theirs were the fathers, and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. We cannot trace this fact perfectly, for want of more materials; and we know not all the purposes of God in making and keeping the Jews a peculiar body—otherwise we should clearly see how all the dispensations of God corresponded to their privileged destination. One thing *is to be* observed. They were not intended to *engross*

the Divine favour, but to be the mediums and diffusers of it. They were not only to be blessed, but to be blessings. Hence their being placed in the midst of the earth, that from them knowledge might be derived, and proselytes to revealed religion might be made; and that, in the fulness of time, out of Zion might go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and that the great Supper, as our Lord calls it, and which was designed for the whole family of Adam, might be spread in the middle of the earth, and be accessible to all.

While we here see that there is nothing like chance in the government of the world, there is what may be called a peculiar providence in particular instances. And we cannot help thinking of our own country. No country on earth bears such a comparison with Judea, in privilege and design. Its appropriation and appointment will account for its preservation, and emerging from difficulties which seemed likely to swallow it up. And when we consider what it is, and what it more than promises to be, we can find reason for its insular situation; its government, laws, and commerce; its talent, and learning, and influence, and dominion. We are a sinful people; but as "the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so, says God, will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." We cannot approve of every thing we have done, especially in the West and East Indies; but we cannot be ignorant that God is overruling it for good: and has ends in view far beyond slaveholders, and mercantile companies, and heroes, and statesmen. We have fought, and we have conquered: but the Negro is instructed; and the captive is made free; and openings are made and occupied for the spread of the Gospel.

The economies of heaven on earth have always been regulated by one end—the cause of the Messiah: and could we view things as God does, we should

perceive how all the revolutions of the world; the changes of empire; the successes or defeats of haughty worms; have affected this cause—immediately or—remotely—in a way—of achievement—or preparation—of purification or—increase—of solidity or—diffusion: and that all things are going on, not only consistently with it, but conducively to it. For, says the Ruler over all, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

And, oh, Christian, there is a special providence over thee. The hairs of thy head are all numbered. One thing regulates all that befals thee, all the dark as well as the clear, all the painful as well as the cheerful—thy spiritual—thy everlasting welfare. "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose."

JUNE 16.—"*Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.*" Psalm xxvi. 3.

AND it will be well to follow David; and to keep the lovingkindness of God before *our* eyes also. And this should be done four ways.

First. As a subject of contemplation. The mind will be active; and it is our wisdom to regulate and sanctify our thoughts. Isaac went out into the field at eventide to meditate; and we may infer the nature of his reflections from his character. David said, My meditation of him shall be sweet. How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! People complain of the difficulty they feel in fixing their minds: but the duty would become *easier* by use—and surely they can never be at a loss

for a theme. Let them take his lovingkindness and set it before their eyes. Let them observe it as it appears in the promises of his Word; in the history of his Church; in their own experience. Let them pass from the instances of his lovingkindness to the qualities of it; and dwell upon its earliness; and fulness; and extensiveness; and seasonableness; and constancy—"Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."

Secondly. As the source of encouragement. How often shall we need this! We shall feel our want of it under a sense of our guilt, and unworthiness, and continued imperfections: and nothing short of the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus, will be able to relieve us. But this *will* relieve us; and *effectually* too. It will give us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace: and boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. And it will do all this without reconciling us to our sins, or even our infirmities—yea, it will make us lament our deficiencies the more, grieving that we serve him so little, who loves us so much. We shall want it in our afflictions. And who can hope to escape these in a vale of tears? Now nothing is so desirable in our sufferings as to see, not only the *hand*, but the *kindness* of God in them. For often they look like the effects of his wrath, and we tremble under them, and cry, "Do not condemn me. I could bear these trials if I thought they were only the strokes of a Father's rod, and sent in love." And they *are* sent in love. They are only the strokes of a Father's rod, laid hold of with reluctance, and laid aside with pleasure.

Thirdly. As an excitement to praise. It is afflicting to think how little the lovingkindness of God is acknowledged by those who are constantly partaking of it. How lamentable, says Leighton, is it, that a world so full of God's mercy, should be so empty

of his glory. Oh, says David, again and again, Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Were there not ten lepers cleansed? But where are the nine? Did ever Hezekiah render according to the benefits done him? And are we better than they? And whence is it that we feel so little the obligations we are under to the God of our mercies? Because the mercies of God are so little remarked and remembered by us. Nothing can impress us when it is out of our minds and thoughts. Therefore, says David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." At the moment when God appears for us, we are sensible of his goodness, and speak well of his Name: but, like the Jews, we soon forget his works, and the wonders which he has shewn us. We inscribe our afflictions upon a rock, and the characters remain—we write our mercies in the sand of the seashore, and the first wave of trouble washes them out.

Lastly. We should keep his lovingkindness before our eyes as an example for imitation. The Scripture calls upon us to be followers of God as dear children. But in what are we to resemble him? His moral, and not his natural perfections. We may wish to resemble him in power and independence; and to be as gods, knowing good and evil. But we are to be concerned to reverence Him, not as the greatest, but as the best of beings—to be faithful as he is faithful—to be holy as he is holy—to be patient, and forgiving, and kind, like himself. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father which is in heaven *is* merciful.

You would do well to keep in view some of your fellow-creatures, who feel that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Think of a Howard, a Thornton. But in *Him* the fatherless findeth mercy. God is love. We cannot equal him. But it is our happiness to resemble. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

JUNE 17.—"*The breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the Heathen.*"
Lam. iv. 20.

SOME commentators suppose that these words are intended to apply to the Savionr—We see no ground for this. Others imagine that there may be a reference to him under the case of Zedekiah. However this may be, the passage may be used—not to prove any doctrine, but to remind us of several things pertaining to the Lord Jesus, and fully established in the Scriptures of Truth.

— Such as his office—"The anointed of the Lord." The very meaning of the word Messiah in the Old Testament, and of Christ in the New. Prophets, priests, and kings, were anointed at their consecration. He was all these; and therefore he is said to be anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Here the term imports majesty;

and he is the King of glory, the King of saints, the King of nations—"With my holy oil have I anointed him."

— Such is the estimation in which he is holden by his subjects—"The breath of our nostrils." He is not so regarded by others. The world knew him not. The Jews received him not. He is now, as to the multitude, despised and rejected of men. This was the case once with his own people. They acknowledge it; and look back with shame and sorrow upon a period—and with some of them it was a long period—during which he had no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty that they should desire him. But he has been revealed in them. And now he appears fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely. Faith makes him precious. He is their righteousness and strength; their glory and joy; all their salvation and all their desire. We may be excessive in our attachment to a creature; but we can never think too highly of Him. It was idolatry in these Jews to call their prince the breath of their nostrils; but Jesus is really and absolutely so to us. How dear! How important! How indispensable!

"This flesh of mine might learn as soon
"To live, yet part with all my blood;
"To breathe when vital air is gone,
"Or thrive and grow without my food."

— Such is their expectation from Him—"Of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the Heathen." The Israelites were literally among the Heathen, surrounded as they were with the Gentile nations. This was also the case with the first Christians. Yea, they were not only encompassed by them, but intermixed with them. In one house dwelt an idolater; in the next, a worshipper of God. A Pagan and a Christian laboured together in the same field, or the same manufactory. We

should not undervalue the outward advantages of Christianity. How much more privileged are we, than our missionary brethren!—They live under his shadow—but it is among the Heathen! While we have our Sabbaths, and Temples, and preachers, and our fellow Christians, with whom we take sweet counsel together. Though there are no Heathens among us, nominally, and as to dispensation, yet there are some who know nothing doctrinally; and many who know nothing spiritually; many who are without God in the world, and who hate and oppose, as far as they are allowed, the religion we experience. And how often is a righteous soul vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly, and constrained to sigh, "Woe is me, that I dwell in Mesech!"—But whatever be the disadvantages of our condition, there is a shadow—and *his* shadow—under which we can *live!* A shadow from the heat—not the shadow of a summer-cloud only; but of a great rock in a weary land: the shadow of a tree yielding, not only shade, but fruit, according to the acknowledgment of the Church—"I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." So it is said, "They that dwell under His shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." His shadow means protection, and all the blessings of his empire. The reign of some rulers is like the shadow of a vulture over the bird of prey; or as a hurricane over the flooded meadow, and the stripped forest—but let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

—Such is his apprehension or suffering—"He was taken in their pits." They watched him, and persecuted him, through life. At length, he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies; and they insulted him, and crucified him, and laid him in the grave—Then his disciples said, "We trusted

that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"—"The breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the Heathen."

— But here correspondence becomes contrast. No type, no image, no illustration, can do justice to him: and when examined, it will always be found to teach more by unlikeness, than by conformity. Zedekiah's subjects had their hopes disappointed and destroyed by *his* arrest: and when carried away, and imprisoned at Babylon, he could no longer defend or comfort them. But Jesus is our hope, notwithstanding his apprehension and death—yea, and in consequence of it. He is made perfect through sufferings. And thus it is that he brings many sons unto glory. When he fell into the hands of his enemies, they thought they had now completely succeeded. But their triumph was short. He fell; but in dying he overcame. And then was the judgment of this world, and then was the Prince of this world cast out. We therefore glory in his Cross, because he here becomes the Author of eternal salvation. He died for us, and rose again; and because he lives, we shall live also.

— Let us, then, *live* under his shadow—securely live; nobly live; joyfully live—not only having life, but having it more abundantly.

— And let us invite others to come, and share with us. "In that day shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under the fig-tree."

JUNE 18.—"*After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from*

Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent-makers. Acts xviii. 1—3.

AQUILA and Priscilla were persons of great religious excellence. They are often mentioned with commendation in the Epistles, as well as in the Acts of the Apostles—especially where Paul says to the Romans, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles." They were born in Pontus—they then resided in Italy—and were now in business—at Corinth. Hither they had been driven by an Imperial decree; and probably thought hard of the measure that banished them. But in consequence of this trial, they became acquainted with Paul, and had him for their host, their friend, and companion. And what a companion must a man of his talents and grace have been! And what an advantage must they have derived from his morning and evening devotions! and his example! and his constant conversation! Surely they would acknowledge, It is good for us that we have been afflicted.

The lives of some have been very changeable: and in their removals, contrary to a disposition to enjoy a fixed and permanent dwelling, they have been ready to murmur and complain. But nothing occurs by chance; and all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to those that fear him. Let such remember that they know not what designs God has to accomplish by events of this nature, either with regard to themselves or their connexions. Let them also reflect that this is not their rest; and view every present residence as

"Preliminary to the last retreat."

In proportion as we look after a better country, and realize it as our own, all earthly situations will be alike indifferent to us—yea, we shall find each of them none other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven.

Paul not only lodged with them, but wrought; for they were of the same occupation with himself. For though he had been educated at the feet of Gamaliel, he had been bred to the craft of tent-making. The Jews were accustomed to give their sons a calling, whatever was their condition in life: wisely considering it a prevention of idleness, a security from temptation, and a resource in accidental indigence. Hence, of their doctors, one was surnamed Rabbi, the shoemaker; another, the baker; another, the carpenter. Bicaut says, the Grand Seignior, to whom he was ambassador, was taught to make wooden spoons. Is this degrading? Seneca says, he would rather be sick, and confined to his bed, than be unemployed. Adam and Eve were placed in the garden to dress and to keep it. And our Saviour declined not working at his supposed father's business—Paul, the chief of the apostles, was not ashamed of labour. But, as a man of taste and learning, he must have been fond of reading; and he desired Timothy to bring him his books and parchments. It seems, therefore, strange that his friends should not have indulged him with leisure and entire freedom for his office, also; by exempting him from manual toil. The workman is worthy of his hire: and this he always claimed as a *right*, contending that they who preached the Gospel should live of the Gospel: adding, also, that no man who warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.

But a right is sometimes to be given up: and there is no general rule but allows of exceptions. Priscilla and Aquila were not rich, and would lament their inability to do more for their illustrious guest. And he had an independence of mind, and

seeing these worthy people themselves labouring to gain a livelihood, he would not be burdensome; but pay for his accommodations. And they are mean souls who will endure to be supported by the alms, and especially the industry of others, when their own hands are sufficient for them—They who will not work should not eat. In a word, Paul knew the infancy of the cause, and was acquainted with all the circumstances of the case; and acted, we may be assured, with wisdom and prudence. Yet his conduct displayed the noblest self-denial and zeal.

There are two places in which he refers to his working. The first shows the degree in which he toiled, often—after teaching, sitting up late at night —"Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for we laboured *night* and day, because we would not be chargeable unto you." The second tells us that his aim was not only to support himself, but to be able to succour others—"Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to *them* that were with me." What a soul had this man! And how well could he add—"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

JUNE 19.—"*Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*" 2 Tim. ii. 1.

WE may have this grace, and not be strong in it. The reality is one thing; the degree is another. We read of weak faith, as well as of strong faith. There are lambs in our Shepherd's fold, as well as *sheep: and in* our Father's House there are little

children, as well as young men. But while there is in religion an infancy which is natural and lovely; there is also another which is unlooked-for and offensive—it is the effect of relapse. It is not of the beginning of the Divine life, but of an after period, the Apostle speaks, when reproving the Hebrews: he says, "Ye are *become* such as have need of milk, and not of strong drink." We must not despise the day of small things. The Saviour himself does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—but he is concerned to bring forth judgment unto victory. And while the feeble-minded are to be comforted, the slothful are to be stimulated; and all are to be kept from "settling upon their lees."

Every thing shews how necessary it is to be *strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Your dangers require it—These are to be found in all the relations, offices, conditions, and circumstances of life. Your passions are not wholly mortified—There is the sin that yet dwelleth in you—The world lieth in wickedness, and you are passing through it—Your adversary, the Devil, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. How much depends upon one instance of falling! And did not Abraham equivocate? and Moses speak unadvisedly? and Peter deny his Lord? And what says all this? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

— Your duties require it. You have a family; and with your house you are to serve the Lord. You have a calling; and in this you are to abide with God. You have the exercises of devotion, in which you are to worship God in Spirit and in truth. You have to walk by faith, and not by sight. You are to have your conversation in heaven, while every thing conspires to keep you down to earth.

— Your usefulness requires it. You are not to live to yourselves, but to him that died for you and rose again. You are to look not on your own

things, but also on the things of others. You are to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, and endeavour to win souls. You are to do good, as you have opportunity, unto all men, especially unto those that are of the household of faith.

— Your trials require it. Who but must reckon upon these in a vale of tears? And if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. To glorify God in the fires, and to recommend religion by its supports and comforts, when every thing else fails—demands no small share of grace.

— Your consolations require it. Consolations are not only delightful, but they are even of practical importance in religion. They enlarge the heart, and enliven zeal, and embolden courage, and wean from the world—And you read of a peace that passeth all understanding! and a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory! Yet what do some of you know of these? More grace would bring more evidence—and raise you more above your fears and depressions—If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

— Death requires it. Other events may, but this must occur. It is a melancholy day to those that have no God; and a very serious one to those who have. To think of it—to meet it—with triumph—or even with confidence—will not this call for more grace than you now possess? And what is the language of all these demands? Despond? No—but be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Without Him you can do nothing: but through his strengthening of you, you can do all things.

Rest not, therefore, in any present attainment. Like Paul, forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those that are before. It is to be lamented that we are easily dissatisfied where we ought to be content; and content where we ought to be dissatisfied. In temporal matters we should have our conversation without covetousness,

and be content with such things as we have: but here, alas! we are avariciously anxious. And though three feet are enough for us in the cradle, and seven in the grave, nothing will hardly satisfy us between.—But in *spiritual* things, with what trifling acquisitions are we contented! Yet here it is even our *duty* to be covetous, to be ambitious! And as before us lies an infinite fulness, and we are not straitened in our resources, let us not be straitened in our desires and expectations; but ask, and receive, that our joy may be full.

JUNE 20.—"*Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy Name.*" Ps. lxi. 5.

So then, they that fear God have an heritage. All of them have not an heritage in the world: and they need not be ashamed to own it. They have the honour of conformity to their Lord and Saviour, who had not where to lay his head. And though they have nothing, they yet possess all things—"I know thy poverty; but thou art rich." Indeed, even as to temporal good, they are above others. He blesses their bread and their water; and bread and water, with the favour of God, are dainties. And a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. It is not only sweeter, but safer, and will go further. For it is true, as Philip Henry often told his family, the grace of God will make a little go a great way. This we have often seen; and should have been amazed how some individuals, with their very slender means, could make a decent appearance, and pay their way, and have a trifle to give to him that needeth—did we not know that the secret of the Lord was upon their tabernacle.

Godliness, also, with contentment, is great gain. Contentment is a kind of self-sufficiency. It does not allow us to want what Providence denies. And who, whatever be his affluence, can be more than content? A man is satisfied with much less in a journey, than he has at home. Now regeneration makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth: and then reason, as well as faith, says to him,

"Turn, pilgrim, turn; thy cares forego;
"All earth-born cares are wrong:
"Man wants but little here below;
"Nor wants that little long."

— But as to spiritual good, they may well say, The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. For the Lord is the portion of their inheritance, and of their cup. His testimonies are their heritage for ever; and they find them the rejoicing of their hearts. All the exceeding great and precious promises are theirs. And theirs is the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. Compared with this, what was the heritage of a Jew in Canaan? of Adam in Paradise? What is the heritage of a crowned worldling? of an angel in glory? Yet this is as true as it is wonderful—"This is the heritage of the servants of God; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

— For this heritage is not obtained by force, nor by purchase, nor by desert; but by bounty and grace—It is "given."

And we may know that we possess it. David speaks without any hesitation—Thou *hast* given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy Name.

O that I could read my title clear. Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion. I long to be able to praise thee as the health of my countenance, and my God. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. And show me a token for good.

— Above all, as—whatever they may doubt or fear, blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; enable me—if I cannot say with confidence, Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy Name; enable me to pray, with supreme desire, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." And,

"In the world of endless ruin,
"Let it never, Lord, be said,
"Here's a soul that perish'd, suing
"For the boasted Saviour's aid."

JUNE 21.—"*Neither give place to the Devil.*"
Eph. iv. 27.

IF this admonition be connected with the words immediately preceding—"Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath;" the Apostle intimates that sinful passion arises from the influence of the Devil; and that when it prevails, we give up ourselves to his power. And can there be a truer specimen of hell, than a man in a state of fury and revenge?

But there is nothing in the case that requires us to confine the address to the repulsion of wrath. The truth is, that Satan has access to us, and in various ways is always endeavouring to encroach upon us; and it must be our object to repel him. The image is familiar and striking. If an enemy was trying to enter your field, your garden, or your house, you would withstand him: for you would see, that as you

yielded, he advanced. In every successful temptation, Satan gains upon us, and takes a position which we ought to have kept.

With the philosophy of this subject we have nothing to do, but only with the fact itself. The Sacred Writers as much support the doctrine of Diabolical Agency, as of Divine. They make use of the same terms and phrases in the one case, as in the other. Is God said to open the eyes of our understanding? Satan is said to blind the minds of them that believe not. Is God said to work in us to will and to do? Satan is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Are Christians filled with the Spirit? Why, says Peter to Ananias, has Satan filled thine heart?

But, while the fact is proved, nothing is said of the mode in which his operations are carried on. We cannot think, however, that it is always done personally and immediately. This would involve an impossibility. If he were *thus* soliciting every individual in every part of the earth at the same time (and his work *is* always going on), he must be omnipresent and omniscient. But he is the god of this world; and having under him all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and having all the errors and the wickedness which *he* has introduced into our region to make use of; and such a depraved nature as ours to work upon—he has power enough to employ *mediately* for all his purposes. The bird need not be afraid of the fowler, if he keeps away from his gun, and his snare; for he is not in much danger from his fingers. How is the fish taken? The angler does not wade into the water, and seize it in his hand. He does not even *see* his prey: but he reaches it, and secures it, by a baited hook at the end of his line, and his rod: yet *he* catches the fish; and would do the same if his instrument was a mile long.

There are many reasons why we should not

give place to the Devil. One is, because his designs are always bad. He may transform himself into an angel of light. And he may endeavour to introduce his evils and mischiefs under specious names: representing covetousness as laying up for the children; and pride as dignity; and revenge as a becoming spirit; and trimming in religion as prudence; and conformity to the world as winning others—Thus we are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But we ought not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. We read of his depths, and his wiles—and God in his Word tears off all his disguises; and shews us at once that his aim is only to ensnare, and enslave, and rob, and degrade, and wound, and destroy. He, therefore, that yields, wrongeth his own soul, and loves death.

Another is, because the more you give way, the more advantage he has over you. It will always be found much more easy to keep him out, than to get him out. When the Moors were admitted into Spain, they staid there for more than six hundred years, in spite of every groan and effort—so much harder is expulsion than exclusion.

Let us therefore avoid parleying with this enemy. He will rise in his demands with every concession. He is not to be treated with, but rejected. Let us guard against beginnings; they increase unto more ungodliness. In this down-hill course we easily proceed from evil to evil. When a person walks out in the morning clean in his apparel, he is cautious how he treads; and the first soil he contracts affects him; but the second offends less; and the fourth much less still; till he says, "It matters not now," and heedlessly dashes on. The youth is not profligate at once: but evil communications corrupt good manners. The first time he complies with a temptation he feels a reluctance, and after the crime is committed, his conscience smites him. But a degree of this is overcome by every subsequent repetition;

and the profaner of the Sabbath, and the drunkard, and the sensualist, go boldly on, waxing worse and worse. One sin naturally leads to another; prepares for another; pleads for another; and renders another necessary, either by way of finish or concealment. Thus David, to hide his adultery, commits murder; and then impiously ascribes this to the providence of God—"The sword smiteth all alike!"

Another reason is, because you need not yield. You are not forced. If the Devil compelled you, he would also justify you; for there can be no guilt where there is no liberty. The motives to sin can never be so great as the arguments to forbear. What can weigh for a moment against the authority of an Infinite Being on whom we entirely depend? And what is any indulgence or suffering, compared with endless happiness or misery? Would God have enjoined upon us a thing that is impracticable? And is not his grace sufficient for us? And is it not attainable by us? Is not his promise true, Ask and it shall be given you? And in the history and experience of his people in all ages, do we not see proof of this? Have not multitudes in the same condition, exposed to the same perils, feeling the same weaknesses and depravity, been more than conquerors?

Finally, resistance is the way to success, and insures it. Hence, says God, resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Can God be mistaken? Can he deceive?—And does not every one know that persons slacken in any course or action, in proportion as they want encouragement? For hope is the mainspring of motion. If a beggar be relieved, however slenderly or seldom, he will in extremity repair to the door again—but not if he be positively and invariably refused.

Resist, therefore, *steadfastly*; and shew that you are in earnest and determined. For there is a heartless undecided refusal that invites renewed application—or at leaat does not shut the door entirely against

importunity. If Satan cannot look into the heart, he is acquainted with the ways in which it shews itself; and is sure to know whether there is a latent wandering after what is professedly renounced—and so will be led to watch his opportunity, and work his means.

— But the Apostle adds, Resist him stedfastly—*in the faith.* There is no fighting on a quagmire. Faith furnishes the only solid, the only safe ground on which we can contend. Faith clothes us with the whole armour of God. Faith connects us with the Captain of our salvation, without whom we can do nothing; but through whose strengthening of us we can do all things—

"And Satan trembles when he sees
"The weakest saint upon his knees."

"A friend and helper so divine
"Doth my weak courage raise;
"He makes the glorious vict'ry mine,
"And his shall be the praise."

JUNE 22.—"*He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.*" John iv. 3, 4.

FOR two reasons. Because Samaria lay in his passage—and because he had in design the conversion of this poor woman. We cannot imagine an event of such magnitude in itself—for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth; and attended with such consequences as this was—for it involved the salvation *also* of many of the Samaritans: we cannot imagine

that such an event was accidental. Nothing takes place by chance in our most common affairs—and is the conversion of a soul for everlasting blessedness a casualty?

In the recovery of sinners the grace of God is equally necessary and illustrious—By grace are we saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. And in the conversion Jesus here accomplished, we have an example of this grace. An example of its freeness; of its gentleness; of its power; and of its effects.

— Of its *freeness*—in selecting this wicked wretch, in spite of her unworthiness, and without her desire; and making her not only the partaker, but the instrument of his goodness.

— Of its *gentleness*—in having recourse to no means of alarm; no violence. No angel appears with a drawn sword; no lightnings flash; no thunder rolls; no threatening terrifies. All is mercy, all is mildness: and he employs circumstances the most natural and suitable, to bring her to conviction, and to induce her to pray.

— Of its *power*—in the victory it gained over the corruptions of her heart. If there be a moral disorder that seems incurable; or an evil capable of resisting all reasoning and motive; it is the spirit of impurity. But behold here a new creature. She is not only pardoned, but renewed; and the change wrought at once!

— Of its *effects*—She not only believes with the heart, but confesses with the mouth. She is not only enlightened, but inflamed. No sooner has she gained good, than she is concerned to do good. Personal religion becomes social. She cannot for a moment keep from others what she has seen and heard herself—What benevolence! What zeal! What urgency! What fortitude! "The woman

then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"—And what success, too! For they who speak from experience seldom speak in vain. "Then they went out of the city, and came unto him." Some of these might have accompanied her from curiosity; and some from the mere contagion of example: but not a few were deeply and savingly impressed. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So, when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days."

The sight of this had so affected our Saviour, as, it would seem, to take away his appetite. He had been hungry, as well as thirsty; and the disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat. But when they returned, and prayed him, saying, Master, eat; he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. And when they said one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." What a repast have I had since you left me! A poor, sinful Samaritaness has been here. And I have manifested myself to her. And under the impression she has hastened to inform and invite her neighbours to come and hear me—and has prevailed! "Say not ye, there are four months, and then cometh harvest?" But see the encouragement you have to scatter the seeds of Divine Truth. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields"—See the woman and her company coming over yonder plain—"for they are already white unto harvest." Here the success is so immediate, that "the sower and the reaper rejoice *together*"—And so it is written—"Behold, the days come, *saith* the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake

the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seeds; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."

JUNE 23.—"*The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.*" **Psalm xxix. 11.**

THE God of Nature gave David a fine poetical talent. And he employed it like a good man, for his own improvement, and the profit of many. It is well to take advantage of the excitement of any present feeling; and to give it a religious direction; according to the admonition of the Apostle James, Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. David did this; for he was accustomed to put his sentiment into verse, on the occurrence of any interesting or significant event. Many of his psalms took their rise from a trouble or a deliverance he had just experienced. The thirty-first psalm was written at the dedication of his new house. The one hundred and fourth was a spring meditation. The eighth is a night scene. The nineteenth, a morning piece. The lines before us were composed in a thunder-storm.

Thunder is one of the sublimest displays of Deity. It generally produces fearfulness and terror. Caligula, the Emperor, at the hearing of it, would creep into any hole or corner. But such a man should reflect, that if God has a mind to kill him, he can do it without raising Nature into a storm—his breath is in his nostrils: he is crushed before the moth—"Thine eye is upon me, and I am not!" And we should do well to think of a more dreadful event—like Baxter—who, when a storm came on as

he was preaching—by which the congregation was obviously disconcerted and dismayed; paused—and then said, "Men and brethren, we are assembled here to prepare for that hour, when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up."

All greatness is comparative. David therefore naturally addresses "The mighty"—as much as to say to them,—You are flattered and feared; but what is the greatest of you before *Him!* Think of the THUNDERER, and adore. "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests." Here let the mind review the description—and we shall see how truly and vividly David's imagination marked and pourtrayed the circumstances and effects of the phenomenon—

He then leads us from the uproar of Nature, to the small still voice of *grace*. He retires with us into the Sanctuary of God, *there* to testify the glory of his *goodness;* and to calm and cheer us with the assurance of his *providential* empire over all the commotions of life, and his attention to the welfare of his people: "And in his Temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, *the Lord* sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give

strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

But this promise, you say, is made to "his people." It is—but be not afraid. Perhaps these people will not be found so unlike yourselves as you imagine. It is here implied, that they are *weak* and *distressed*—otherwise they would not want strength and peace. Both these blessings are insured.

— Are they by nature without strength; and have they from experience a growing conviction of their inability? Yet, with all this sense of weakness, have they trials to endure, duties to perform, a race to run, a warfare to accomplish? As their day, so shall their strength be. His grace is sufficient for them. Let the weak say, I am strong.

— Do they need rest and refreshing? The God of peace shall give them peace always by all means. Not worldly peace. He has no where absolutely engaged to give this—I say *absolutely;* for if it be good for them, they shall not want it—for they shall want *no* good thing. But there is a peace as far exceeding every other as the soul surpasses the body, and the heaven the earth, and eternity time—the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and which keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. This does not depend upon outward things. In the world, says the Saviour, ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace. And hence, as when weak they are strong—so, though sorrowful, they are always rejoicing.

Yet it is only the beginning of it they have here. At death they enter into peace fully. Every enemy is then vanquished—and the din of war is heard no more. The dangerous, treacherous, raging, sickly sea, is crossed—And then are they glad because they be quiet. So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

JUNE 24.—"*And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus; one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.*" Acts xviii. 7, 8.

THIS was at Corinth. Here he continued a year and six months, assured that the Lord had much people in that city. At first he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews. But upon their opposing and rejecting him, he sought another place to teach in. It was not a building appropriated to public worship. At this time, and long after this, the Christians had no such edifices. They assembled wherever they could find an accommodation. The spot was indeed consecrated—not by a religious ceremony—but by the presence of God and the service itself. The Saviour himself attached no holiness to walls or ground: but said, *Where*—let it be where it will—two or three are gathered together in my Name, *there* am I in the midst of them. He preached not only in the Temple and in the synagogue; but in the private dwelling, and by the way-side, and in the mountain, and on board a ship. And his apostles followed his example; and *every* where lifted up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

The house Paul now entered belonged to a worshipper of God, whose name was Justus; and it joined hard to the synagogue. The nearer the church, the proverb is, the further from God. This is founded on the observation, that what men can easily reach and enjoy, they often neglect. And who are they that come late to the sanctuary? Not those from a distance, but they who live near. Who are absent in bad weather? Those who have carriages, or can procure vehicles; not they who

come on foot. Who most frequently excuse their non-attendance? The strong and healthful; not the indisposed and weak. Who sleep during the Service? Not the poor and laborious, who have seldom an hour of repose—but the lazy and genteel, who never know what fatigue means.

It was a trial of principle in this man to open his house to Paul. It would create him inconvenience, and trouble, and expense; and it would draw upon him danger and reproach; as it was an open avowal of his adherence to the cause; and he knew that the sect was every where spoken against. How many professors of religion, yielding to their selfish and dastardly reasonings, would have refused. They would have said—But what will people think of me? What will my relations say? And may not my business suffer? We are never prepared for a course of godliness till we can give up every thing to God, especially our paltry reputation, and our worldly profit. Bunyan, with as much truth as genius, places all the pilgrims under the conduct of Mr. Great-Heart. It is to intimate that we shall need courage every step of the way to the shining city. Let us consult not with flesh and blood, but only with conviction; and go forth to the Saviour without the camp, bearing his reproach. We shall then, not only retain peace of mind, but please Him whose lovingkindness is better than life. Did Obededom repent of taking in the ark? The Lord blessed his house, and all that pertained to him. Who was ever a loser by any thing he did for the cause of God? Who *can* be a loser while *He* remains true who has said, Them that honour me I will honour. They shall prosper that love Zion?

What Justus did in accommodating Paul, rewarded and dignified him; and it is now told for a memorial of him. How must it have delighted him to see the good that was done under his own roof! There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. But here a man of some

rank and influence, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believes—nor is this all. His *house* too is added to the Lord! Yea, and *many* of the Corinthians, hearing, believe and are baptized!

Yet Paul baptized but few of them. And when he wrote his epistle to these people, he rejoiced in the fact. This has puzzled those who look upon the dispensation of the sacraments, as they are called, as by far the most honourable and sacred part of the ministerial function. And in all our churches persons are allowed to preach before they are *authorized* to administer. And many reasons have been alleged, to account, consistently with this—for Paul's conduct in thanking God, that in all the time he staid here, and notwithstanding the multitude of converts, he had only baptized Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanus. But the reason he himself assigns overturns an unscriptural notion and practice—He had devolved upon others the baptism of the new converts, because, says he, Jesus Christ sent me not to baptize—which outward form could be dispensed by others of inferior station and talent; but—which is by far the most important and difficult part of my office—to preach the Gospel.

JUNE 25.—"*The ark of the Covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them.*" Numb. x. 33.

THAT is, the *Lord* did this. But the Ark was the symbol of his presence, and the seat of his residence; from which, by the cloud, he regulated all their movements. Yet the expression is still metaphorical; and we must not suffer the condescension of his language to injure the glory of his perfections.

He feels no perplexity. He never deliberates; never examines; never searches: for "there is nothing that is not manifest in his sight." But as men do this, and must do this, if they would avoid mistakes, and decide and act judiciously: the Lord thus intimates—that his wisdom was concerned in all their journeyings; and that his people may keep their minds in perfect peace, being stayed on him—for, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, he careth for them—they are under his guidance—nothing befals them by chance. All their removals, and their rests; all their situations, their trials, their comforts; are chosen for them by the only wise God their Saviour, who is always on the *look-out for* them—"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

He not only leads his people in the way that they should go, but is concerned to afford them *repose*, as well as direction. Thus, in his promise to Moses, he said, "My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Thus, in the review of his goodness, he says, by Jeremiah, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the Wilderness, even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest."

Thus here he searched out for them a resting-place—*in* their journey, and—*after* it. To the former, Moses refers, when he says, "The Lord your God went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in"—before they were required to lay them entirely aside. Thus, before they reached Canaan, he led them into many resting-places; in some of which they continued only days; in some, weeks; in some, months; and in a few, even years. It was a fine resting-place when they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees—But this was at the beginning of their journey, and designed to encourage them. They could not look for many

stations like this. Each, however, which they successfully occupied, was of the Lord's selecting.

We may apply this to the temporal residences of Christians. How moveable have some of them been! But *He* has led them from one situation to another: and it should be satisfying for them to think—that he could find a better resting-place for them than they could have chosen for themselves, for he perfectly knows both the place and the persons. Sometimes the lines fall to them in agreeable scenes; and he kindly exceeds their hopes. In other cases, the abode is less inviting; and even trying. But they must acquiesce, without murmuring or complaining, in their Conductor's disposal—conscious that they are not worthy of the least of all his mercies; and remembering that they are not yet come unto "*the* rest and inheritance which the Lord giveth them."

— It will apply, also, to their spiritual peace and refreshment in their travels. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." There are spiritual resting-places on this side heaven. In their acquaintance with his Throne, his House, his Day, his Word, the Covenant of Peace—here he affords them the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Here he maketh his flock to rest at noon. Here they lie down in green pastures, and are fed beside the still waters.

But the principal resting-place he sought out for them was at their journey's end. It was Canaan—"In the day I lifted up my hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt, into a land that I *had espied for them*, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands."

Yet there is a better country. And this, Christian, He is looking out for you! Whatever you now *enjoy*, your repose is imperfect and interrupted.

Something, aloud or in whisper, says—Arise, and depart hence; for this is not your rest.

But there remaineth a rest for the people of God. A rest from all toil and temptation. From all sorrow and sin. A rest not only *in* God, but a rest *with* him.

"O glorious hour! O bless'd abode!
"I shall be near and like my God:
"And flesh and sin no more control
"The sacred pleasures of my soul."

JUNE 26.—"*And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*" John iv. 27.

THAT is, immediately upon the conversation, and just as he had said to her, I that speak unto thee am the Messiah.

Thus their return broke off the conference; and the woman was probably grieved to see the disciples so near at hand. Our most interesting interviews in this world, are often and soon interrupted. It is sweet to hold converse with our fellow-Christians and with ministers; and it is far sweeter still to hold communion with the Saviour. There are moments in the sanctuary and the closet, when we can say,

"While such a scene of sacred joys
"Our raptur'd eyes and souls employs,
"Here we could sit, and gaze away
"A long, an everlasting day."

But not only our sinful distractions, but our lawful connexions, and businesses, and cares, invade and dispe se our enjoyments; and make us long after

a state where these interruptions will be no more. Now we have visions, or at best, but visits—then we shall be for ever with the Lord.

— The disciples were astonished—and the cause of their marvelling was, "That he talked with the woman." Had they an apprehension that she was a woman of ill character? And, like the Pharisees, did they suppose, that it was incompatible with the sanctity of the Messiah to hold any intercourse with persons of infamous reputation? This is not probable. She was a stranger to them. Our Lord indeed knew her; but it was by his divine prerogative; and as yet he had no opportunity to speak of her to his disciples.

— It is more likely that their wonder arose from seeing him in close and friendly conversation with a woman of Samaria; for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. The rancour excluded even the common civilities of life. At present the disciples seemed not aware of their Lord's design to extend favour to the Gentiles; and were but little acquainted with the nature of his kingdom—"where there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus."

— Again. Women have not always been properly regarded. If they contribute to their own degradation, they must blame themselves. It has often been asked, why the conversation of even wise men, is, with women, always vain and trifling? We do not entirely admit the fact. If, however, there be truth in the supposition, the cause is to be found in females themselves—they must be pleased with such discourse—for men will naturally accommodate themselves to their taste—and it is their interest to do so. Let women rise and vindicate their sex—many are now doing so—let them shew that they consider themselves, and wish to be considered, as rational as well as animal creatures: and as companions as well as playthings and

toys, and articles of sense and dress. But at this period the sex were treated, and are so still in the East, as a kind of beings inferior to men. Now the disciples knowing that Jesus never trifled in conversation, but always spoke superiorly and divinely; were amazed to find him discoursing on deep and important subjects with a poor menial woman, judged incapable of understanding them.

The meanness of the persons to whom he manifested himself always scandalized flesh and blood. Have, it was asked, any of the rulers believed on him? But this people, who know not the Law, are cursed. Yet it was his *glory* that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them; and that the common people heard him gladly. When he rejoiced in spirit, he said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. And his Apostle follows in the same strain. "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

But we here see the diffidence and submission of the disciples—"Yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?" Confidence in his greatness and rectitude, awed them into silence. Whence we recommend two things. First, let us observe the words of Solomon: "If thou hast *thought* evil, lay thine hand upon thy *mouth*." A good man should make conscience of the state of

his mind as well as of his speech: but what we cannot always prevent in thought, we may restrain in expression. Words are worse than thoughts: they add to them; they shew more of the dominion of evil; they are more injurious to others; and betray ourselves more into difficulties. In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin. Therefore let us resolve to take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue. David prayed, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

Secondly, as the reverence of the disciples induced them not to question the propriety of our Lord's conduct—though for the present they could not understand it—so should we act towards him. He is not bound to give account of any of his matters; and he often requires us to walk by faith, and not by sight. But we know that his work is perfect, his ways are judgment. Let us never charge him foolishly; but acquiesce in the most mysterious of his dispensations; assured that he has reasons for them which at present satisfy him, and will satisfy us when they are finished and explained. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter.—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of Saints."

JUNE 27.—"*Thou hast been a shadow from the heat.*" Is. xxv. 4.

AND what he has been, he is—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Heat means evil; any evil, every evil, from which it is desirable to be screened. Heaven is a state—and many have reached it—where the sun does not

light on them, or any heat. But it is otherwise here. Here many things affect the mind, as oppressive heat does the body: and make us pant for deliverance and repose. The wrath of God—a sense of his fiery Law in the conscience—the temptations of Satan—the persecutions of wicked and unreasonable men—afflictions, public and private, personal and relative—Here is the heat.

Where is the shadow? Behold me, says the Saviour of sinners, Behold me! Come unto me, and I will give you rest. *This* is the rest, says God, wherewith ye shall cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

But what kind of shadow is He? We read in the Scripture—Of the shadow of a cloud—Of the shadow of a tree—Of the shadow of a rock—Of the shadow of a tabernacle from the heat. The shadow of the cloud in harvest is grateful, but transient. The shadow of a tree under which we sit down, is delightful; but it is limited to a small distance; and the rays frequently pierce through the boughs. The shadow of a great rock is dense and cool; but it befriends not on every side, and covers little from the vertical rays. The shadow of a tabernacle into which we may continually resort, and find not only room, but entertainment, is the most complete and inviting. All these have some truth in their application to Him: but none of them can do justice to the subject. He is what they imply, but *more;* and not only more than each of them, but more than *all* of them; and more than all of them *combined;* and more than all of them combined in their *best* estate—and *infinitely* more. He is not only *perfect,* but *Divine:* and he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under *the shadow of the Almighty.*

Let me leave, then, other shadows. They are all inadequate to the wants of the soul; and, in some way or other, will be sure to fail me—yea, whatever

else I get under for shelter, will not only prove vanity, but vexation of spirit.

But let me make use of this shadow from the heat. He is not far off. He is accessible. He is easy to approach. And it is only by repairing to him that I can enjoy the benefit derivable from him.

And while believing, I rejoice in him with joy unspeakable; let me shew my benevolence, by recommending him to others. They, also, are strangers to repose. They want rest unto their souls. And he is sufficient to receive, and defend, and succour, and bless all. O happy period! when the eyes of men, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord! And when in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed! The Lord hasten it in his time!

JUNE 28.—"*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" 1 Kings xix. 13.

THE principle of this question was not ignorance—God well knew how, and why, he came there. But he would know from Elijah himself; and therefore asks him—that, being called upon to account for his conduct, he might be convinced of his folly, and be either speechless, or condemned out of his own mouth. We may view the inquiry three ways.

First, as an instance of God's moral observation of his creatures. His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he pondereth all his doings. Nothing can screen us from this inspection. Elijah was in a wilderness, and alone; he had even left his servant behind him—but the eye of God followed him. And the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. And let us not imagine that he

only looks after an extraordinary character, like Elijah. No one is too small and inconsiderable to be disregarded by him. Every human being is not only his creature, but his subject, and responsible to him. The meanest slave is great in the sight of God, as possessed of a soul, and destined for eternity.—God has a right to know where we are, and what we are doing; and a much greater right than a father or a master has to know this, with regard to a child or a servant: for we are absolutely His.—And he is interested in observing our conduct: interested as a judge, who is to pass sentence upon our actions: interested as a friend and benefactor, who would check us when we are going astray, or recal us when we have wandered. For,

Secondly, we may consider it as a reproof given to a good man. He ought not to have been here, hiding himself from his enemy, and begging that he might die; but should have been engaged in carrying on the cause of God in the reformation he had so nobly begun—He was therefore blameable. God does not cast him off; but he reprehends him. And as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens. And faithful are the wounds of this Friend.

And how does he administer this reproof? He had all the elements under his control; and he shewed him what he *could* do: "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave." "And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said"—You cowardly deserter? You

ungrateful, rebellious wretch?—No: but—"What doest thou here, Elijah?" And this, "in a small still voice"—a kind of under tone, or whisper, as if no one should hear it beside. Here was no upbraiding; nothing to inflame passion; but a kind and calm appeal to reason. How forcible! and yet tender! It is thus his gentleness makes us great. It is thus he does not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. It is thus he calls upon us to be followers of him, as dear children. If a brother be overtaken in a fault, let us not employ the earthquake, the wind, and the fire; but the small still voice. Let us take him aside. Let us tell him his fault between him and us alone. Let us restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Reproof should never be given in a passion. It is too much, says an old writer, to expect that a sick patient will take physic, not only when it is nauseous, but boiling hot. And we know who has said, "In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Thirdly, as a rule by which we may judge ourselves. Let us suppose that we heard God addressing us, as he did Elijah. How should we answer him? Could we say, I hope I am where Thou wouldst have me to be? and doing what Thou wouldst have me to do? He *does* thus enquire. And therefore it behoves us so to act as to be able to give a satisfactory account of our conduct.

— Let us apply the question to our troubles. How came we in these difficulties? Have they befallen us in following after God? Or have we drawn them upon ourselves by our folly and sin?

— Let us apply it to our connexions. We are choosing associates—Are we walking with wise men, or are we the companions of fools? We are engaging ourselves for life—Are we marrying in the Lord, or unequally yoking ourselves with unbelievers? "What doest thou *here*, Elijah?"

— Let us apply it to our recreations. Are they such as conduce to the health of the body? and accord with purity of mind? or are they amusements and dissipations which, if God should call us to account, would strike conscience dumb?

— Let us apply it to our stations. Are we abiding with God in our own callings? or are we acting out of our proper sphere of duty? How many have injured, if not ruined, their usefulness and comfort, by improper removals, or striking their tent without the cloud!

— Let us apply it to our religious services. We ought to have an aim, and a very worthy one, in coming to his House. Happy they who, when they hear the enquiry, What doest thou here, Elijah? can say; Here I am—not from custom or curiosity, but to hear what God the Lord will speak; and to see his power and his glory as I have seen him in the Sanctuary.

And let us remember, that a false answer will be more than useless. We often assign a reason very different from the true one, to an enquiring fellow-creature—and him we may deceive—but God is not mocked.

JUNE 29.—"*Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.*" Acts xviii. 9, 10.

THE Lord is a very present help in trouble; and before his people *express* their apprehensions, he foresees them, and effectually provides against them.

It is obvious Paul was now depressed and discouraged. He had nature in him, as well as grace. The Christian, and even the Apostle, did not destroy the man. He had genius; and not only great sensibility, but a tinge of melancholy is perhaps

inseparable from this endowment. He was also the subject of bodily enervation; and was now worn down, not only by constant preaching, but also by working manually, day and night, to support himself and relieve others. In allusion to which, he says in his Letter to these Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Yea, he was now, it would seem, afraid—of men—of suffering persecution—of death. Is this he that said, None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy? Yes; the same. He then spoke sincerely, and according to the frame he was in. But what a change do we feel, if the Lord hides his face; or faith fails; yea, or if there be only a variation in the humours of the body, or the state of the weather!

The Lord therefore removes his fear by the assurance that no man should set upon him to hurt him; for "He was with him; and had much work for him to do"—so that even his destination secured him. And see how faithfully and *remarkably* this was accomplished. For though the place was so abandoned, and he had so many enemies, he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them without any molestation. At length a storm arose, which tried his confidence in the promise. But it issued in the proof that the Saviour in whom he trusted was true and righteous altogether. For all the Jews in the city made a violent insurrection against Paul, and brought him before Gallio, the deputy. But he refused to take cognizance of the affair, and drave them from the judgment-seat. Upon which, provoked by his conduct, the Greeks, who had joined the Jews in this assault, fell upon *Sosthenes*, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in sight of the bench—But *Paul*, on whose account the persecution was *raised*, was suffered to escape uninjured, and con-

tinued his labours a considerable time longer, undisturbed, and at length withdrew from the place in peace!

— Is not this enough to prove that nothing is too hard for the Lord? that he can turn the shadow of death into the morning? that our enemies, however numerous and malignant, are all under his control? and cannot move a hair's breadth beyond the length of the chain in which he holds them?

Do we not here see, that if we have his promise, we have enough to establish, strengthen, settle us, whatever our difficulties and dangers may be? Heaven and earth may pass away, but his Word cannot fail. If a child in the dark feels his father's hand grasping his, and hears him say, I am with thee, fear not; he is calmed and confident. Yea, says David, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me!

"How safe and how happy are they
"Who on their good Shepherd rely!
"He gives them out strength for their day;
"Their wants he will surely supply.
"He ravens and lions can tame—
"All creatures obey his command:
"Then let me rejoice in his Name,
"And leave all my cares in his hand."

JUNE 30.—"*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God.*" Ps. xlvi. 4.

WHAT can this "river" be—but that blessed Covenant to which David himself repaired in the time of trouble, and extolled beyond every other resource or

delight—Although my House be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

And what are "the streams" of this river? but the outgoings and effects of this Divine constitution —The blood of Jesus—The influences of the Holy Spirit—The doctrines and promises of the Gospel—The ordinances of religion—And all the means of Grace.

There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens. They will all apply in a pre-eminent degree to the case before us.

The first regards *prospect*. Nothing can be more pleasing or interesting to those who relish the simple beauties of Nature, than to walk by the side of living streams; to see the fish playing and disappearing; the green weeds waving their long streamers in the water; the reeds bending and recovering themselves again; the rippling of the shallows; and the glassy reflexions of the deeps; while the bushes and trees form a quivering shade on the banks.—Here is enough to fix the tasteful mind; and to induce the poet to take out his pen, and the painter his pencil. What views have Christians by the side of their streams! How various! how endearing! how impressive the objects which strike and occupy their minds! "My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will rejoice in the Lord."

The second regards *traffic*. It is an unspeakable advantage to a place to be accessible by water, as it renders commerce not only practicable but easy and extensive. The Humber was the making of Hull. The Thames has rendered London so famous. Were this stream dried up or diverted, how would the mistress of the nations be humbled and reduced! It is owing to their trade, carried on by means of their *rivers*, that many cities on the Continent have united

themselves to the ends of the earth, and acquired such distinction and wealth.—And by these streams Christians obtain riches for the soul and eternity; unsearchable riches; durable riches, with righteousness. It is by these they carry on business with the land that is very far off, the merchandise of which is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

The third regards *fertility*. Imagine a dry and barren land where no water is, and think what happiness would ensue, if springs gushed forth from the sands, and meandered through meadows with grass and reeds and rushes. Lot chose the plain country, the vale of Sodom, near Jordan, because it was well watered, like the garden of the Lord. Did you never read the words of Balaam in describing the blessedness of Israel? "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." What is a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in its season, and with never-withering leaves; but a Christian by these streams, growing in the Divine life; adorned with the graces of the Spirit; and filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God?

The fourth regards *supply*. What could a city do without this precious, all-important fluid? An enemy, therefore, always endeavours to cut off the water, to compel a place the more suddenly and speedily to surrender. Hence the boast of Rabshakeh: "With the sole of my foot I have dried up all the rivers of the besieged places."—This shall never be the case here. Your resources can never fail. Your relief can never be cut off. You have always access to the God of all grace. And how superior are your supplies! How free! How full! How satisfying! "Jesus answered, and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst

again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Are you asking, Who will shew us any good? Let the subject supply an answer. O there is—there *is* a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding. Leave the world and enter the Church. There—how unlike creatures, who are all vanity and vexation of spirit—there you will find a Saviour full of grace and truth. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.

O my soul, am I the subject of this happiness? Let me give proof of it. Let me be a witness for God. Let me exemplify his word. Let me convince others that there is—a reality—an excellency—a blessedness in the religion of Jesus, that can set the heart at rest, and yield a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The pleasures of which we have been speaking are the pleasures of the way. What will be those of the end!

"If such the sweetness of the *streams*,
"What must the fountain be?
"Where saints and angels draw their bliss
"Immediately from Thee."

END OF VOL. I.

George Wood, Printer, Union Street, Bath.

OCT 4 1944